

SERMONS,

AND

PLANS OF SERMONS,

ON MANY OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TEXTS OF

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY THE LATE REV JOSEPH BENSON.

Την διακονίαν σου πληροφορησον.—2 Tim. iv. 5.

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SERMONS,

AND

PLANS OF SERMONS.

CCXX.

CHRIST, AS OUR MEDIATOR, PERFECTED
BY SUFFERINGS.

HEBREWS V. 8, 9.

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

How very opposite to, and apparently inconsistent with each other, are the characters given us of the Mediator, in different parts of the sacred writings, and even of the same book or chapter! In the beginning of this epistle, he is exhibited to our view as the Son of God, “whom the Father hath appointed heir of all things,” and by “whom he made the worlds;” who “being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,” “in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth;” “being so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they;” being that person whom they are commanded to worship, and to whom the patriarch David

addressed the following words, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." But here we see him, apparently much lower than the angels, clothed with our frail flesh and blood, "compassed with infirmity," subject to temptation, oppressed with fear and terror, prostrate in the dust, and "offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, to him that was able to save him from death," to which, nevertheless, he was delivered. He is spoken of indeed as "a Son," yet like other sons, "learning obedience by the things which he suffered," and gradually made perfect, before "he became the author of eternal salvation to all that obeyed him." Now, what are we to make of these things? how can we reconcile such apparently contradictory accounts to each other? My brethren, this is easily done, if we can believe the catholic faith, and allow that he who is perfect God, and possessed of all possible perfections as the eternal word of the Father, was also perfect man, "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting:" in other words, that in his mysterious person, the perfect human nature, consisting of soul and body, was indeed united, indissolubly united, to the divine, but was not, while he was on earth, (and indeed is not now,) absorbed by it. The union was such as gave an infinite dignity to the person of the Redeemer, and infinite merit to his sufferings, but not such as made him incapable of suffering, or rendered his sufferings of no efficacy, which would have been the case if they had not been felt. Only let this be kept in remembrance, and Christ's humiliation and sorrow will no more be a stone of stumbling to us, or rock of offence, than his exaltation and glory.—Indeed his humiliation was absolutely necessary, in order to our sal-

vation. For it was necessary that our "great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, should be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Ch. iv. 14, 15; ver. 1, 2, 7; Matt. xxvi. 36; Mark xiv. 32; Luke xxii. 39.) — —

Consider we,

I. IN WHAT SENSE DID CHRIST, ALTHOUGH A SON, LEARN OBEDIENCE FROM WHAT HE SUFFERED, AND WAS MADE PERFECT.

It was no singular thing for a son, or child of God by adoption, to be chastised, to suffer, and thereby to be instructed to obedience. He therefore speaks not of him as a son in such a way, or in any way in which a mere creature might be God's son; but as he was his Son in a peculiar sense, his "only begotten Son," who was "in the beginning with God, and was God." (John i. 1, 14.)—That *He* should do and suffer the things here spoken of, was indeed marvellous. Therefore it is said, he did and suffered them, "although he was a Son." The words imply not only the necessity of his doing and suffering what is here ascribed to him, but his love, that when, on his own account, no such thing was required, or in any respect needful, yet that he would submit to this condition for our sakes. — —

But what is the *obedience* which he learned thereby? The word (*υπακοη*,) so rendered, means, "an obediential attention, or compliance with the commands of another," when they are heard and known. This obedience in Christ was two-fold: *General*, in the whole course of his life. Every thing he did was not only right and holy, as to the matter of it, but as to the form and manner of it; it was obediential; he did all

things because it was the will of God that he should do them: and this his obedience to God was the life and beauty of the holiness even of Christ himself. This, however, is not chiefly meant here, but rather that *peculiar* compliance with the Father's will, whereby he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." For "this commandment had he received of the Father that he should lay down his life for his people;" which he did, in the way of obedience, saying, "A body hast thou prepared me: lo! I come to do thy will," by offering up that body. (Heb. x. 5, 9.) —

But how did he *learn* this obedience? It must be observed, the word, (*μαρτυρω*,) here used, signifies *to learn* as a disciple, with an humble and ready reception of, and submission to, the instruction given. It is said, He learned *obedience*; not he learned to obey; which will give us light in the meaning of the passage. He did not learn that to be his duty when he knew not before, or did not consider; nor was he impelled to, or instructed in, the various acts of the obedience required, as we are often taught by chastisements. But he learned obedience by experiencing it, as a man learns the taste of meat by eating it. Thus he was said "to taste of death," or to experience what it was, by undergoing it. The obedience he learned was a submission to undergo great, severe, and terrible things, accompanied with patience under them, and faith for deliverance from them. This he could have no experience of but by suffering the things he was to undergo, and by the exercise of appropriate graces while suffering. Thus he learned, or experienced in himself, what difficulty obedience is attended with. And this way of his learning it is what is so useful to us, and so full of con-

solation. For if he had only known obedience, though ever so perfectly in theory alone; what relief could have accrued to us from it? How could it have been a spring in him of suitable compassion towards us? But now, having fully experienced the nature of that special obedience which is yielded to God in a suffering condition, what difficulty it is attended with, what opposition is made to it, how great an exercise of grace is required, &c., he is disposed to support and succour us in our obedience and sufferings.—As to the means whereby he learned obedience in this sense; he did so “from the things which he suffered.” His whole life was a scene of suffering, in one way or other. His outward condition low and indigent, from which sufferings are inseparable; he was exposed to temptations of all sorts, and to oppositions.—From these he learned obedience, because they afforded him occasion to exercise the graces of humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, faith, &c., which were habitually resident in his holy nature; and he was “made perfect,” or a perfect example for us to imitate.—Here I would observe, that many of the difficulties which we meet with in Scripture are entirely owing to our ignorance, either of the subjects under consideration, or of the meaning of the terms made use of to express those subjects. This is peculiarly the case here: there would be no difficulty in conceiving how Christ could be said to be “made perfect,” if we observe, that, being *very man*, his human nature, before his resurrection, was in a state of infirmity, and not of perfection, his body being subject to various weaknesses, and the faculties of his soul, of course, being influenced thereby. While in his childhood, he is said to have “increased in *wis*

dom," as well as in stature, viz., as the powers of his mind were gradually unfolded, and subjects, through the medium of his senses, were presented to his contemplation. And if he increased in wisdom, he must of course have increased in love to God and man, and all other graces and virtues, though always perfectly free from defilement of sin, internal or external. But when he was raised from the dead, and exalted to his Father's right hand, his human nature was fully and for ever freed from this state of infirmity, and was rendered completely perfect. This however, does not appear to be the meaning of the word *perfect* here; but the expression rather refers to his having fully accomplished the work he had to do, and the sufferings he had to endure, in order to his being a perfect Mediator and Saviour. Accordingly, the expression here used by the Apostle, (τελειωσας,) is, literally, *being perfected*; answering directly to the word used ch. ii. 10, (τελειωσαι,) "to perfect sufferings;" only there it is used *actively*; "it became him," (God the Father,) "to make perfect the Captain of our salvation;" here it is used *passively*, with respect to the effect of that act, and signifies his being *consummated*; or having finished his whole process, from his leaving the celestial glory to his returning to it; which process it was absolutely necessary he should accomplish, that his character as an High-Priest might be completed, and he might be consecrated as such.—This is another meaning of the term, and a meaning given it by our translators at the close of the seventh chapter of this Epistle, where they have rendered (τετελειωμενον,) another participle of the same verb, *consecrated*, or dedicated to his high office. The priests under the law were consecrated by the death

and oblation of the beasts offered in sacrifice at their consecration, (Exod. xxix.) but it belonged to the perfection of Christ, as an High-Priest, that he should be consecrated by his own sufferings. This was necessary, both from the nature of the office, to which he was to be solemnly set apart, and to answer the types of the Aaronical priesthood. This, however, was only the external means of his consecration, and an evidence thereof. He was really consecrated by the act of God the Father, who said, "Thou art my Son," &c., and by his own act, when he said, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." (Ps. ii. 7; xl. 7, 8.)

II. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS.

He "became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."—The salvation here spoken of, is the salvation of the Gospel, that wherewith "Christ came to save sinners." (1 Tim. i. 15.) See vol. ii. p. 36.—This is termed *eternal*,—in comparison with those temporal salvations which the Israelites under the Law partook of through the medium of their legal priests and sacrifices, with their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and their introduction into the land of Canaan:—really and emphatically; the deliverance, restoration, and preservation obtained by the people of Christ, though experienced in time, issue in eternal blessedness; that is the end of all the benefits of grace now bestowed, and they are all bestowed in order to that end; the whole therefore is properly and emphatically called eternal:—absolutely: the salvation is endless: by sin we had made ourselves obnoxious to damnation absolutely eternal; and if the salvation procured for us were not equally eternal, it would not be perfect nor

suited to our wants.—But in what sense is he “the author,” (*αἰτιος*,) the *cause* of our salvation? There are causes of different kinds: the moving, and original cause, is the mercy and love of God the Father; the final cause is his glory; the instrumental cause, on God’s part, are his Word and ordinances. But Christ is the meritorious cause, by his oblation and intercession having procured salvation for us; and the efficient cause, by his Word and Spirit, communicating—a knowledge of it, as our wisdom in our illumination; a title to it, as our righteousness in our justification and adoption; a meetness for it, as our sanctification in our regeneration and renewal in righteousness; a preservation to it, as our strength, help, and protection in our perseverance; and the final possession of it, as our complete redemption in our glorification.—But to whom is he the cause of eternal salvation in these respects? “To those that obey him?” This is the instrumental cause on our part. The Greek word, (*ὁπακούω*,) imports, “to obey on hearing.” Originally it signifies, “to hearken with a readiness of mind to subjection.” Faith which cometh by hearing, is intended; the obedience of faith. (Rom. i. 5; ii. 7—16.)—This is the consequence of his being made perfect as above; of his exercising all perfect graces and virtues as our example; of his being consummated after having finished his whole process; of his being consecrated as a perfect High-Priest and Mediator; of his experiencing obedience through sufferings, and sympathizing with us in our trials, and communicating succour as needed. —

INFERENCES.

How true that declaration, "Before honour is humility!" Humility must precede exaltation, and suffering must go before glory. This was the case with the Redeemer, and it must, more or less, be the case with all his followers. His state upon earth was a state of infirmity and trial. It is true, all his infirmities were sinless, but they were, nevertheless, all troublesome and grievous. By them he was exposed to all sorts of temptations and sufferings, which are the springs of all that is evil and painful to our nature. And this was the case with him, not for a few days, or a short season only, but during his whole course in this world. The accounts given us of him in the Gospel, and the circumstances here mentioned by the Apostle, of his "offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears," and "though a Son, yet learning obedience by the things he suffered," puts this point out of all question.—Let us not then think it strange if we have our seasons of weakness and infirmity, and are thereby exposed to temptation and suffering. Let us not wonder if we be called to "die with him" with whom we hope "to live," and to "suffer with him" with whom we hope "to reign." Apt we are indeed to complain: the whole nation of professors is full of complaints; one is in want, straits, or poverty, another in pain and affliction; some are in distress on account of their connections and relations, some are persecuted, some are tempted, some are pressed with private, some with public concerns; some sick, and some weak, and some are fallen asleep. And these things are apt to make us faint, to despond, and be weary, while every momentary gourd which, like that of Jonah, interposeth a little between us and the wind and sun, is too much

valued by us. But what would we have? Do we consider what, and where we are? These are the days of our flesh, wherein these afflictions are both due to us, and unavoidable. (Job. v. 7.) Our relief in this condition is, to pay a suitable and due regard to our great Example, to what he did, the manner in which he behaved himself “in the days of his flesh,” when he had more difficulties and miseries to endure than we all. His patience was immovable in all. (Isai. xlii. 4.)—Whatever befel Him, he bore quietly and patiently. Being buffeted, he threatened not; being “reviled, he reviled not again;” “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” Let us go and do likewise.—And let us remember, a life of glory may succeed a life of suffering. The Lord Christ is now no more in a state of weakness and temptation. The days of his flesh are past and gone. (Rev. i. 18.) The state of infirmity wherein he was obnoxious to death is now past, and he “lives for evermore.” Henceforth death has no power over him, nor any thing else that can give him the least distress. All his sorrows are now ended, and his return to life was to absolute, eternal, and unchangeable glory; and that not for himself merely, but for his people also. For “being made perfect, he is become the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.” — — * * * *

CCXXI.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO DILIGENCE IN
PURSUIT OF HIGHER BLESSINGS.

HEBREWS vi. 11, 12.

We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

THERE are three things, which every true and genuine minister of the Gospel will keep continually in view, and steadily seek in behalf of his people, in all his ministrations among them, in private and public; he will labour to bring them to a thorough acquaintance with true and genuine christianity, and experience of it; he will endeavour to maintain their perseverance, that they may not decline from the faith, leave their first love, backslide, and, after “beginning in the Spirit, end in the flesh;” he will set before them, and excite them to pursue even higher things, that they may not only not fall away, and “draw back into perdition,” but that they may “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” may “go on unto perfection,” and “apprehend that for which they are apprehended of Christ Jesus.”—Such are the important points kept continually in view, and pursued by its author throughout this Epistle. As it was primarily addressed to the believing Hebrews, or to such as had been converted from Judaism to christianity, resident chiefly in Judea, so the objects of it were the bringing those Hebrews to a thorough know-

ledge of the nature, excellency, and importance of the Gospel, in preference to the Law, to the genuine experience of its privileges and blessings, and the practice of its duties: to confirm them in these things, that they might not be moved away from them by the insinuations or ill treatment of their persecutors, or by any temptations from honour or reproach, from prosperity or adversity; (Heb. ii. 2, 3; iii. 6, 14; iv. 1;) to urge them to press forward in the good way on which they had entered, "running with patience the race set before them," (Heb. xii. 1;) and "following peace with all men and holiness," till they were "made perfect in every good work." (Ch. xiii. 21.)—To encourage them in this, he holds out the example of those, who "through faith and patience inherited the promises;" with whose characters they were in general well acquainted, as being recorded in the Old Testament. "We desire that every one," &c.—Consider,

I. THE STATE AND CHARACTER OF THOSE, WHOM THE AUTHOR OF THIS EPISTLE ADDRESSES IN THESE WORDS.

They were not heathens or Jews, but true christians, converted from Judaism to genuine christianity. According to the testimony borne in the preceding verses, they possessed all the essential parts of true christianity; christian knowledge, christian experience, and christian practice; all which they had evinced in the midst of various and great sufferings, endured with a spirit of patience, gratitude, and joy.—christian knowledge. They were acquainted with the principles of the doctrine of Christ. (Ver. 1.) They were "enlightened," (ver. 4,) with the knowledge of the Gospel and its grand doctrines, or "the truth as it is in Jesus,"

spoken of John viii. 32; xiv. 26; xvi. 13, 14.) This knowledge was one great end of the gift of Christ, (Isai. xlii. 6; Luke i. 78, 79;) of the preaching of the Gospel, (Acts xxvi. 18;) whereby we become acquainted with God, Christ, ourselves, our fall and redemption, our need of salvation, its nature, necessity, attainableness, the way of attaining it, the will of God, our duty, our happiness, &c.; all of infinite importance to be known.—Christian experience. They had “tasted of the heavenly gift,” (ver. 4,) a living, loving, obedient faith; (Eph. ii. 8; Col. ii. 12; Phil. i. 29;) the consequence of true illumination, and remission of sins, or justification, termed “the gift of righteousness.” (Rom. v. 15—21.) They were “made partakers of the Holy Ghost;” as a Spirit of adoption, and liberty, succeeding a spirit of bondage; (Rom. viii. 15, 16; Gal. iv. 4—6;) and as a Spirit of regeneration; (John i. 13; iii. 5;) even a real, internal, universal, and continued change, producing dominion over sin, (Rom. vi. 14; 1 John iii. 9, 10; v. 18,) victory over the world, (1 John v. 4,) and love, (1 John iv. 7—9,) with all the other fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. v. 22.) They had “tasted the good word of God;” the Gospel in general, the doctrines, precepts, and promises of which are the proper food of the soul that is born of God; called “milk” and “strong meat:” this the believer *tastes*, he eats and digests, and turns into nourishment in the stomach (shall I say?) of meditation; he hath an appetite for it, is sensible that he feeds on it, and enjoys sweetness and comfort in so doing, and derives strength and nourishment from it. They had tasted “the powers of the world to come:” the expression (μελλων αιων) means *the coming*, or, *future age*, i. e. according to the language of the Prophets and

Jewish doctors, the times of the Messiah, who is termed by Isaiah, (ch. ix. 6; LXX. πατήρ του μελλοντος αιωνος,) *the father of the age to come*: “the powers,” therefore, “of the world to come” in this sense, must be the powers and privileges of the christian dispensation; such as, an assurance of the favour of God, the being stamped with his image, at least in a measure, and having fellowship with the Father and Son: But as this would coincide with the preceding particulars, we must rather understand by the expression, a future state; believers taste or participate the powers even of this, or have an anticipation or earnest thereof while on earth, in the knowledge and love of God, and communion with him. (John xvii. 3.)—They had, and were eminent for, christian practice. The Apostle speaks of their “work and labour of love;” (ver. 10;) their faith *wrought* by love, (Gal. v. 6,) producing all good works, its proper fruits; (Jam. ii. 14—26:) their love *laboured*; (1 Thess. i. 3,) for “his name,” (ver. 10,) whom they loved, in “ministering to the saints,” whom also they loved for his sake. —

They had manifested still further the truth of their religion by their fortitude and patience under great sufferings. (Ch. x. 32—34.)—Notwithstanding, however, this knowledge, experience, and practice, those christians were still imperfect in all their attainments, even in “the first principles” of christianity. (ch. v. 11, 12,) and were still but “babes,” (ch. v. 13,) in experience, strength, stability, and spiritual stature; and, therefore, had need to be excited to go forward.—This leads me to consider,

II. THE BLESSINGS WHICH HE HOLDS OUT UNTO THEM, AND EXHORTS THEM TO PURSUE.

These are expressed by the general name of perfection. And perfection, in some sense, was certainly commanded by Christ, (Matt. v. 48,) pursued by St. Paul and the first christians, (Phil. iii. 12—15,) and made the great end of the ministry of the Apostles. (Col. i. 27, 28.) This implies,—a perfect acquaintance with christian doctrines, especially the principal of them; (Heb. v. 14, *τελειων*; 1 Cor. ii. 6;)—A perfect possession of christian graces and privileges, one of which is here mentioned, “the full assurance of hope.” This arises from the full assurance of *faith* in the truths and promises of Scripture, of our interest in them through Christ, and, consequently, of our justification and regeneration, and of our title to, and progressive or increasing meetness for, eternal life; hence the full assurance of *hope*, or a lively and confident expectation of that eternal life, implying a good conscience, peace of mind, and a persuasion of our growth in holiness. It is accompanied with “perfect love,” (1 John iv. 17,) with humility, resignation, &c., in equal proportion.—A perfect performance of christian duties. (Heb. xiii. 21.) [Here the preacher should explain the rule, motive, end, and spirit of a right performance of duty, and of all good works, and their great importance.]—This includes, or draws after it, the inheriting the promises, viz., the obtaining their accomplishment, and the promised blessings, which are partially received in this life, as, grace to help in time of need, enabling us to conquer all our enemies, and to do and suffer the will of God;—(here some of the promises of the Old and New Testaments might be specified:) entire sanctification, as comprising deliverance “from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;” (Ezek.

xxxvi. 25;) an entire and constant dedication of ourselves to the Lord, employing our powers and endowments for him, and doing every thing to his glory; (Rom. xiv. 9; Col. iii. 17; 1 Cor. x. 31;) being stamped with the Divine image, and conformed to him; (Ps. xvii. 15; 2 Pet. i. 4; Rom. viii. 29;) eternal life, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the future glory. (Ps. xvi. 11; Dan. xii. 2, 3; John vi. 44, 54; 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43; Rom. viii. 21; Rev. xxii. 3—5.) These promises are inherited by faith and patience. — —

III. THE DILIGENCE REQUISITE IN ORDER TO THE ATTAINMENT OF THEM, AND THE MOTIVES TO THAT DILIGENCE.

“That ye be not slothful,” &c.—These, like all other blessings enjoyed by us, whether temporal or spiritual, are the free gifts of God, but will not be conferred on the negligent or slothful. We must not be unconcerned, (*ωδρῶν*,) about these things, but deeply sensible of their infinite excellency and necessity, and, therefore, importance. Not lukewarm in our desires after them, but “fervent in spirit,” “hungering and thirsting for this righteousness,” this “living bread and water.” Not slothful, but diligent in pursuit of them, shunning sin in temper, word, and work, internal and external, and all hinderances; such as the love of the world, worldly cares, a multiplicity of worldly business, carnal company, needless amusements and avocations; and using all means and helps. Not slothful in practice, which we are when we do not stir up ourselves to the discharge of those duties, and the exercise of those graces, which the Gospel directs us to

cultivate, and requires of us. Not dilatory and tardy, and deferring our pursuit of these things to what we may think a more convenient season, but seeking them immediately.—This unconcern, lukewarmness, sloth, and procrastination, is opposed to the *diligence* (σπουδην) here recommended, (ver. 11,) implying concern. earnestness, zeal, despatch, “We *desire*.” (ἐπιθυμοῦμεν.) Chrysostom is copious in the consideration of this word, and of the wisdom of the Apostle in the use of it. It certainly implies a most earnest desire, and such ought to be the desire of ministers towards the proficiency of their people. Where this is wanting there will be but a cold, lifeless, and unprofitable administration of the word. But whence does this desire proceed? from zeal for the glory of God, compassion for the souls of men, and a conscientious regard to our duty and office, with respect to its nature, trust, end, and reward. These are the principles that both kindle and supply with fuel this fervent desire for the good of our people, that oil the wheels of all other duties, and increase their speed. According as these principles flourish or decay in our minds, so will be the acceptableness or unacceptableness of our ministry in the sight of Christ, and the profitable discharge of it towards the people.—We desire that “every one of you.” St. Paul so felt the care of the whole flock, as to be solicitous for the good of every individual among them; he so laboured that, if it were possible, not one of those whom he watched over should miscarry. O that we might do the same!—“Do show the same diligence;” (ἐνδείκνυσθε) *to show* is so to do a thing, that the doing of it may be quite evident. *The same diligence:* Chrysostom insists much on the Apostle’s wisdom in this

expression also. For by it he insinuates his approbation of what they had done already, and declares that he required nothing of them in order to their attainment of what was still before them, but what they had already some experience of. If we faint or grow negligent in our duty, if careless, or slothful, we shall never hold out to the end; or if we continue in such a formal and lukewarm course as may consist with this sloth, we shall never attain the blessings which we aim at. The oppositions and difficulties, which we shall assuredly meet with from within and from without, will not give way to faint and languid endeavours, nor will the holy God debase the rewards of eternity, by conferring them on those who have so little regard to them, that they give themselves up to lukewarmness and sloth in the pursuit of them. Our course of obedience is described as “running” in a race, and “fighting” in a combat, and those who are slothful will never be crowned with victory. — —

To be a little more particular.—Our diligence should bear some proportion to the greatness of the ends which we have in view, and which are to be attained by it. These ends, we must remember, are so great, that no human understanding can comprehend them, whether we consider their excellency, their importance, or their absolute necessity. They are the glorifying the infinite Jehovah, the salvation of our own and other men’s souls in time and in eternity, the escaping the boundless and everlasting torments of hell, and attaining the infinite and never-ending joys of heaven. Now, can we be too much affected with such things as these? Can we esteem them too highly, desire them too eagerly, or labour for them too diligently? When we know

that, if our labour for this “meat that endures to everlasting life” do not succeed, we are undone for ever, is it not incumbent upon us to labour for it assiduously? When life and death are set before us, and the question is, whether we shall live for ever in heaven or in hell? And this question must be determined by our obeying or disobeying the Gospel, and our obedience to it will be ineffectual without diligence; surely we must allow it is time for us to be in earnest.—We should consider the greatness of the work we have to do, as well as the ends which, through the mercy and grace of God, will be attained by it, and our diligence should be answerable thereto. Knowledge in Divine things must be attained, for we cannot save our souls in ignorance. The flesh must be crucified, and our corruptions mortified; our souls must be renewed after the image of God.—Custom, habit, and temptations from the Devil and the world, from prosperity or adversity, honour or dishonour, pleasure or pain, life or death, must be conquered; assurance of pardon and salvation must be sought; the ordinances must be attended; means used, and duties performed, ordinary and extraordinary, in order to our attainment of it. Wives, children, &c., require duty from us; every place and circumstance, every person and condition bring upon us a fresh call for duty. And should persons who have so much business upon their hands be idle and slothful?—Further. The shortness and uncertainty of the time allotted us for performing all this work, should be an inducement to us to make haste and be active. Time passes on, and we are continually exposed to dangers and diseases, and yet a few days, and we shall be no more. We that are now preaching, and you that are hearing, shall soon be car-

ried out, and laid in the dust. How important then, that we awake and bestir ourselves; who know not whether we shall have another opportunity? We should surely show (πασαν σπουδην, 2 Pet. i. 5,) *all haste*, as well as care, in this great work.—Our diligence should be in proportion to the diligence of our enemies in seeking our destruction. If we sit still while they are plotting and labouring our ruin, or if we be negligent and indolent in our defence, while they are diligent in their assault, we may easily conceive what will be the consequence. Satan, we know, is diligent, (1 Pet. v. 8,) his ministers and instruments are diligent; therefore we must “be sober and vigilant.”—Our diligence should be in proportion to the means we enjoy, the grace we have received, and the talents bestowed upon us, (Luke xii. 48.) It may well be expected that a horseman should go faster than a footman, and in general, that our progress should agree with the advantages afforded us. So in religion, wheresoever greater privileges are enjoyed, greater will be the return expected.—Our diligence should be answerable to the great cost bestowed on us, and the many and great mercies of God to us. Our whole life has been filled up with mercies; we cannot look back upon one hour of it, or one event of it, but we behold in it the effects of Divine mercy. We feed on mercy, are clothed with mercy, &c. Our many deliverances and blessings, and especially our redemption by the life and death of Christ, call for returns of gratitude and devoted service, and inculcate upon us that we be not indifferent and slothful in the pursuit of the crown of life and glory, to which “the God of all grace hath called us by Christ Jesus.”—We should be diligent, considering the

relations in which we stand to God. Should not the soldier fight for his general? the servant work for his master? the child serve his father? the disciple imitate his Lord? &c. (Mal. i. 6.)—How diligent should we be in “running the race set before us,” and “fighting the good fight of faith,” who have so many attendants to assist us, and are “compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses!” (Heb. xii. 1;) to whom angels, as well as saints, minister? Nay, God waits in patience to be gracious; also Christ, in the offers of his blood, his righteousness, and grace, (Rev. iii. 20;) the Holy Spirit, striving, assisting, comforting us. Men, angels, devils, sinners, saints, God, Christ, have their eyes upon us!—If we be not diligent, we shall lose even “the things we have wrought,” shall lose our labour, as well as our souls. If we be but “almost christians,” we shall be but almost saved. If several run in a race, they that do not all run fast enough, may as well not run at all. God hath fixed the price at which the pearl must be bought; if we bid a penny less, we may as well bid nothing. Nay, according to the Apostle, in this passage, if any one of us show not “the same diligence, but are slothful,” he will fail to inherit the promises.—If we be not diligent in “going on to perfection,” we “shall fall away,” perhaps foully, and even finally, so as not to be “renewed to repentance,” (ver. 4—6,) and our end shall be dreadful: we shall resemble the ground, “whose end is to be burned.” (Ver. 8.)—On the other hand, if we be diligent, we shall attain “the better things which accompany salvation,” and shall be like the ground which “receiveth blessing from God.” (Ver. 7, 9.)—It is not impossible to be diligent, and to acquire these blessed ends. Thousands of our fellow-

creatures and fellow-sinners, men of like passions with ourselves, have, through the mercy of God, “inherited the promises;” having attained perfect holiness through faith, in order to everlasting happiness with God. — —

CCXXII.

THE GOSPEL GIVES THAT PERFECTION WHICH THE LAW COULD NOT.

HEBREWS vii. 19.

The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

THESE words contain a reason of the doctrine advanced in the preceding verses, respecting the change of the priesthood in the church of God. In order, therefore, to understand them, we should look back to the preceding context. (See ver. 4—19.)—The doctrine here mentioned, concerning the weakness of the Law, and its making nothing perfect, is frequently taught, especially in this Epistle. (See ver. 11; ch. ix. 9; x. 1.) It is a doctrine of great importance, that we may be sensible of the superior excellency of the christian dispensation above the Jewish, may be duly thankful for our great privileges, and may improve and live up to them, not resting in the attainments of Jews, nor measuring ours by theirs.

But inquire we,

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE LAW HERE, AND IN WHAT SENSE IT MADE NOTHING PERFECT?

The Mosaic dispensation, or Sinai covenant, is here termed the Law, as indeed it is in general. (John i. 17; Rom. vii. 1, 8; Gal. iv. 4, 5; Heb. x. 1.) It includes the whole Law, ceremonial, political, and moral. It did not make the people or church of God, collectively considered, perfect: it was then in a state of minority, "under tutors and governors until the time appointed." (Gal. iv. 2.) It did not perfect them as individuals, did not "make the comers thereunto perfect." (Ch. x. 1.)—It did not perfect their illumination, as to the knowledge of things spiritual and divine. It was a dark dispensation, and contained but a shadowy representation "of good things to come, and not the very image of the things;" not an exact and perfect delineation of the things. Hence the words of Zechariah. (Luke i. 76—79.) In this respect, as to acquaintance with divine things, John the Baptist was greater than any that preceded him, and "he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (Matt. xi. 11.) The Jews had imperfect information given them concerning their own moral condition, concerning God, the Mediator, the way of salvation, the spiritual worship of God, and obedience to his laws, and especially concerning a life to come.—It did not perfect their justification and reconciliation with God; it did this only typically and figuratively. (Ch. ix. 9; x. 1—4.)—It did not perfect their sanctification and conformity to God. (Rom. vii. 5.) The truth revealed under it, whether doctrinal, preceptive, or promissive, was chiefly of a worldly and carnal nature, as respecting carnal observances, victory over carnal enemies, the possession of worldly and carnal blessings, as rest in Canaan: these were not calculated to sanctify the un-

derstanding, the will and affections, and draw them from earth to heaven. The sanctifying Spirit, and the salvation consequent thereon, was not then so largely given: (John vii. 37, 38; 1 Pet. i. 10—12.)—Therefore it did not perfect their faith: their faith was not so comprehensive, did not take in so many truths and promises; or if it did, it did not receive and embrace those truths and promises with so much assurance and satisfaction as the faith of christians may do; it did not trust and rely on the Messiah, and on the mercy and grace of God through him, with so much confidence, steadiness, constancy, and perseverance.—It did not perfect their hope. The object of hope was not so clearly and fully revealed, nor were they so assured of their being entitled it, by becoming children of God, adopted, regenerated, and sanctified as such.—It did not perfect their love. They were under a spirit of bondage. (Rom. viii. 15; comp. 1 John iv. 18.)—It did not perfect their obedience. (Rom. viii. 3.) The rule of obedience was imperfect, as to its spirituality and extent, till explained by Christ in his sermon on the mount, and by his Apostles in their writings: the motives were imperfect: the rewards and punishments of a future world, and the love of God in Christ were imperfectly revealed; the grace communicated to renew and strengthen our minds, imperfect. —

II. WHAT IS THE BETTER HOPE INTRODUCED, AND IN WHAT RESPECTS IT MAKETH PERFECT?

The better hope is that revealed in the Gospel, which supplies a better *cause, ground, and source* of hope. The Gospel contains clearer, fuller, and more satisfactory information concerning the objects of hope,—the

immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body; especially by attesting, with indubitable proofs, Christ's resurrection;—a new world; that “the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption,” &c. (Rom. viii. 21;) that Jesus will “make all things new;”—the nature of future happiness is the vision and enjoyment of God;—concerning the way to acquire this hope, that believers are children of God, and therefore heirs of it, &c.;—that if they continue in the faith, “he that hath begun a good work will perform it,” (Phil. i. 6,) and “present them holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight.” (Col. i. 22.)—The *ground* of hope is the atonement and intercession of Christ, so much superior to the expiations of the Law, and the intercession of the Jewish high priests; inasmuch as Christ hath fully, and once for all, expiated the guilt of sin, and procured free, full, and eternal forgiveness to the penitent that believe in him; (ch. ix. 14; x. 5—18;) having obtained a free liberty of approaching the throne of grace here, (ch. iv. 14—16,) and of entering his kingdom hereafter. (Heb. x. 19.)—The *source* of hope; that is, the enlightening, quickening, witnessing, renewing, strengthening, and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit. (John xvi. 7.) In allusion to these influences, Jesus cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” (John vii. 37, 38.) —

The Gospel, giving us this better hope, including these three particulars, does what the law could not do.—It perfects our illumination in all truths necessary to be known by us in this state of trial, in order to our glorifying God, becoming useful to our neighbour, saving our own souls, and fulfilling the end of our being,

preservation, and redemption.—It perfects our justification, both before God, by the atonement it reveals, removing all our guilt, condemnation, and wrath; (Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34; 2 Cor. v. 18—21;) and in our own consciences, giving us the fullest assurance of our justification. (Heb. ix. 13, 14; Acts xiii. 38; Rom. v. 1.)—It perfects our sanctification: the word of the Gospel revealing, the sacrifice of Christ procuring, and the Holy Ghost, promised in all his fulness, imparting this great blessing; that is, a purgation from sin, in temper, word, and work, a deadness to this world, an unreserved devotedness to God, and conformity to him.—Thus it perfects our faith in the respects above mentioned; so that our faith in God and invisible things is a kind of “beholding his glory;” (2 Cor. iii. 18; Heb. xi. 1;) in his revealed will, an assurance of truth, excellence, and importance of all that is revealed; in Christ, and in the promises through him, it grows up to assurance.—It perfects our hope, giving us such a view of the object of it, the heavenly happiness, of our title to it, of our meetness for it, and affording such an earnest of it, that we have the “assurance of hope.”—It perfects our love. (1 John iv. 18.) It represents God in Christ so amiable, so kind, &c., as to authorize us, as believers, in an assurance of his love to us, and to excite such love to him in return, that all fears, as well as enmity, are done away.—It perfects our obedience. For hereby we not only have a perfect rule of duty, and the most powerful motives, but we have a perfect spring of obedience in the graces of faith, and hope, and love, opened within us; so that we may not only desire, but delight to obey. His laws are “put into our minds, and written on our hearts,” and thus we become “per-

fect in every good work to do his will." (Heb. viii. 10: xiii. 21.) — —

III. IN WHAT WAY WE MAY ATTAIN THIS PERFECTION.

In order to the attainment of that perfection, which can be acquired under the christian dispensation, it is necessary we should "draw nigh to God;" (*δι' ἧς ἐγγιζομεν;*) *through which we approach* God. The Gospel exhibits God as a father, and shows the way of approaching God, by breaking off our sins by repentance; our sins of omission and commission; renouncing our own righteousness,—giving up the world and every creature,—yielding ourselves unreservedly to God in new obedience.—Christ's sacrifice and intercession obtains for us the liberty and power, and we must use that liberty, and enter in at the open door.—The Holy "Spirit helps our infirmity." (Eph. ii. 18.)—Guided by the Gospel, introduced by the Mediator, and influenced by the Spirit, we must draw near in prayer, sincere, fervent, importunate, persevering.—By faith, relying on Christ, and on the mercy of God through him, and appropriating to ourselves the promises of God, and the blessings promised.—Not resting till we are "an habitation of God through the Spirit;" and till we "dwell in God, and God in us." — —

CCXXIII.

THE PRIESTHOOD AND MINISTRATIONS
OF CHRIST, SUPERIOR TO THOSE OF
AARON.

HEBREWS ix. 11, 12.

Christ being come an High-Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood; he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

THE appellations made use of by the Apostle, in speaking of the Redeemer, are not used without the greatest propriety. God, from the beginning, had promised Christ, the Messiah; and in all ages the Jews expected him. Here the Apostle declares that he was come, and they, therefore, needed to expect him no longer. He declares too in what character he had come, of an High-Priest. He sustains indeed various other offices; but this is a principal one.—Consider,

I. THE HIGH-PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

He was not of the order of Aaron, but of a more ancient order, Melchizedek. (Heb. vii. 14.) The priesthood did not begin in Aaron, but existed long before. The first-born were priests. Hence we read of priests before the institution of the Aaronical order. (Exod. xix. 22; xxiv. 5.) Jesus, being the first begotten of God, was, on that account, by right, a priest, and the Aaronical priesthood was typical of his. It

consisted of three things; oblation, intercession, benediction.—*Oblation.* (Heb. v. 1; viii. 3.) Not that he had any thing beside himself to offer. No other sacrifice than his own immaculate body. (Heb. x. 5, 10; Eph. v. 2.)—*Intercession.* When he had offered himself a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, he ascended up on high, and entered into the holy of holies, “not made with hands, there to appear,” with the virtue of his blood, to intercede for us. (Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25.) His intercession is not servile and precarious, but efficacious and glorious, as being that of one who has “all power in heaven and on earth.”—*Benediction.* (1 Chron. xxiii. 13; Numb. vi. 23.) This was the only sacerdotal act recorded as performed by Melchizedek. (Gen. xiv. 19, 20.) According to the Rabbins, at the morning sacrifice the priests under the Law blessed the people with the solemn form of benediction; but at the evening service they blessed them not, to show that in the evening of the world, the last days, which are those of the Messiah, the benediction of the Law should cease, and the blessing of Christ take the place of it. As an emblem of this, when the Messiah was about to appear, and the conception and birth of his forerunner was predicted, Zechariah, when he executed the priest’s office, (Luke i. 8,) and the people waited for him to receive his benediction, could not speak unto them, because he was made dumb, as if to show that the power of benediction was now passing to another and greater priest; whose doctrine on the mount begins with a declaration of the characters that are blessed, (Matt. v. 3—11,) and who, when he left his disciples, “lifted up his hands and blessed them.” (Luke xxiv. 50.) Yet this function he chiefly performed subsequent to his re-

surrection; as it is written, "Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts iii. 26.) —

II. WHERE HE MINISTERS.

In "a greater and more perfect tabernacle:" "greater," not as to bulk, but dignity; "more perfect" than that through which the high-priest passed, as well because it is of Divine work, as because it perfects those that come to it.—It means, his own human nature. The bodies of men are termed their tabernacles. (2 Cor. v. 1; 2 Pet. i. 14.) Christ called his own body a "temple." (John ii. 19.) "His flesh" is the "veil." (Heb. x. 0; see also John i. 14.) Herein "dwelt the fulness of the Godhead." The human nature of Christ in its conception, gracious qualifications and endowments, and especially in its relation to the divine, was more excellent and glorious than the ancient tabernacle could be; more perfectly fitted to the sacred ends of it, both for the inhabitation of the Divine nature, and the exercise of the sacerdotal office, the offering an atonement for sin, making intercession for transgressors, and conveying benefits to men.—This was "not made with hands." "The Lord created a new thing in the earth, a woman compassed a man." (Jer. xxxi. 22.) In this his human nature, he ministered on earth, and in this he yet ministers in heaven. It means, the church militant, typified by the court of the people and of the priests, where was the altar of burnt-offerings, and the laver of brass, to intimate the necessity of justification by the blood of Christ, and sanctification by the Spirit, that we may be ad-

mitted to worship in the holy place, or to be spiritual worshippers. This was a type of the true church: so also the show bread, the sprinkling of the blood before the veil, the altar of incense, were of a typical nature. Christ did in substance what the Jewish priests did in figure; he offered up himself without the gate, provided a laver of regeneration, lighted up the lamp of his Gospel, gave the bread of life, sprinkled the blood, offers incense with the prayers of the saints.—It means, the church triumphant in heaven, of which the holy of holies was an emblem. The high-priest entered this - once a year, sprinkled the blood before the Divine Majesty, between the cherubim upon the mercy-seat, and made intercession. Christ entered into heaven once for all, viz., entered into the presence of God, with the virtue of his blood, and there appears as our Advocate and Intercessor. There he continues to minister, till the time of the restitution of all things. —

III. BY WHAT MEANS HE HATH OBTAINED A RIGHT TO MINISTER FOR US IN THIS HEAVENLY TABERNACLE.

“Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered.” His entrance was typified by that of the high-priest, described at large Lev. xvi. (See Ver. 11—15.) He offered the blood of the slain victim at the altar for a sin-offering, and there atonement was made. He carried some of the blood into the sanctuary to sprinkle it. (Ver. 23.) The Apostle does not say *with* what he entered: for he entered also with incense, but *by* virtue of what? As Christ himself was perfectly innocent, and had never sinned, he might have been admitted himself, without blood: but as his object was to speak for us, and minister on our

account, and to introduce us, blood was necessary, "without which there is no remission." Blood is a sign of death, and this was necessary to indicate that the person for whom he was to minister deserved to die.—[The insufficiency of the blood of animals should here be shown. See ch. x. 5.] There was a treble dissimilitude between the high-priest and Christ. The high-priest entered by "the blood of bulls and goats;" Christ by his own blood: the high-priest entered "every year;" Christ "once" only. The high-priest entered into the tabernacle made with hands; Christ into heaven. The dignity of the person of Christ is above that of the high-priest; in the discharge of his office he is superior to him, from the excellence of his sacrifice, (his own blood,) from the place into which he entered by virtue of it, (heaven itself,) and from the effect, (eternal redemption.) — —

IV WHAT HE HATH OBTAINED FOR US.

The good things about which he ministers are,—Not things temporal, such as the Jewish priest ministered about; but things spiritual and eternal, as remission of sins, acceptance with God, adoption into his family, regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, and eternal life; all included in the term, "eternal redemption;" *i. e.*, eternal deliverance from sin, its guilt, power, and defilement, with all its consequences, as death and hell, by power and by price, *viz.*, the price of the blood of Christ, with which we are bought of the hands of justice and wrath, to which we had forfeited our all. All redemption respects a state of bondage and captivity, and implies deliverance therefrom, by power and price. The latter only is properly

called redemption. (The λυτρωσις from λυτρον.) Christ's redemption is ever said to be by price, or ransom. See Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45; 1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 18. The person of Christ gave worth to the price. He gave *himself* and his *own blood*. (Eph. v. 2; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Tit. ii. 14.) This redemption is said to be eternal, because of the subject matter of it; things not temporal, like those of the Jews, but eternal, the redemption of the soul, the body, and the forfeited inheritance. — — “Things to come.” The blessings to be received under the Messiah were termed so, whether they were blessings spiritual or eternal. The high-priests of the Law were priests of good things present, viz., of visible and temporal things, as victory over temporal enemies, and an inheritance in Canaan; but Christ is a priest of things which were shadowed forth by these, and were expected by the believing Jews, but not received; and are therefore said to be “*things to come.*” — — * * * *

CCXXIV

THE SUPERIOR VIRTUE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS ix. 13, 14.

If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

THE importance of serving the living God cannot be doubted by any who consider that it is the end of our creation, (Isai. xliii. 21; Acts xvii. 24—27,) of our preservation, (Luke xiii. 5; Rom. ii. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 9,) of our redemption, (Luke i. 74, 75; 2 Cor. v. 14,) and that it is necessary to our happiness, here and hereafter. (Rom. ii. 6—11; Heb. v. 9; Rev. xxii. 14.)—But however important and necessary it may be, it is implied here that we cannot serve him, at least acceptably, till our “consciences be purged from dead works.” The reason of this is evident. If God be served acceptably, he must be served in faith, hope, and love. (1 Cor. xiii. 1—3, 13; Heb. xi. 6; iii. 6; Tim. i. 5.) These are founded on liberty of access to him, and reconciliation with him, which we have not while under the guilt and defilement of “dead works,” even as the legally unclean under the law were not allowed to approach God in his worship, or even mix with his people. That this may appear more manifest, consider we,

I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY "DEAD WORKS," AND HOW THE STATE OF THOSE WHOSE CONSCIENCES ARE DEFILED WITH THEM RESEMBLES THAT OF THE UNCLEAN UNDER THE LAW?

The expression, *dead works*, occurs, I think, only in this Epistle. (See ch. vi. 1.)—It means, sins of all kinds, in act, word, temper, desire, thought, sins of omission and commission, called dead works, because they proceed from spiritual death; are useless and fruitless as dead things; defile the soul, and render it unfit for communion with God or his people, as any ceremonial uncleanness among the Jews excluded a person from the sanctuary and congregation of God. To explain this, we observe, all those who had a liberty of approaching God in his solemn worship, were considered, in a sense, as sanctified; that is, separated, and dedicated to God; and such as were deprived of this privilege were called common and unclean. Now as this uncleanness might arise in various ways, as explained in the law of Moses, so especially it was occasioned by contact with the dead; to which there is an allusion in the text. Every one, that by any means touched a dead body, whether dying naturally or slain, whether in the house or field, was defiled. No such person was to come into the congregation, or near to the tabernacle. And this was to represent before the people, the curse of the law, of which death was the great visible effect. The present Jews have this notion, "that defilement by the dead arose from the poison that is dropt into them that die by the angel of death." The true reason is, that death came in by sin from the poisonous temptation of the old serpent, and is the effect of the curse, which, in consequence of sin, took hold upon us.

Hence these works deserve, and lead to, eternal death. To prevent mistake, let us observe, all works, even works of piety, as reading, hearing, meditating, praying, receiving the sacrament, works of justice, and charity, as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, &c. and works of temperance and sobriety, as governing our appetites, &c., are but dead works, if not done from spiritual life, viz., in faith, hope and love, in consequence of union with the living God.—How much are we all chargeable and defiled with dead works in both these senses, till we are purged, as in the text?—We are defiled with the guilt of the past sin, and, therefore, are by nature children of wrath, deprived of the favour, and excluded from the family of God, denied fellowship with him, being under condemnation, and exposed to wrath. Hence, if at all enlightened and awakened, we are sensible of this, and, till we can consider ourselves purged, as in my text, are without confidence, hope, or love in approaching God; and if not enlightened and insensible of our state, we have perhaps a false confidence, an ungrounded hope, or a total indifference. In either case the conscience is defiled; and in the former, there is fear and dread, and the sinner dares not approach God.—But the conscience here may be put (synecdochically) for the whole soul, and all its faculties; yea for our whole persons, souls and bodies, which are all defiled, and, therefore, must be cleansed. (Isai. lxiv. 6; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Eph. v. 26, 27; 1 Thess. v. 23.) — This leads to the inquiry,

II. HOW THE UNCLEAN UNDER THE LAW WERE CLEANSED, AND HOW WE MAY BE CLEANSED?

“If the blood of bulls and goats,” &c. In the foregoing verse the Apostle had respect only to the sacrifices made by the high priest on the day of annual atonement, on which he entered into the holy of holies, (Lev. xvi.) That entrance was permitted only by the blood of a young bullock and a goat,—offered, the former, for the priest, and the other for the people. The blood was, some of it, offered at the altar for a sin-offering, (Lev. xvi. 6,) and some of it carried into the sanctuary, to be sprinkled there, upon and before the mercy seat. (Lev. xvi. 14.) But here he enlarges his subject by the consideration of other expiatory sacrifices under the law: for he joins to the “blood of bulls and goats” “the ashes of an heifer,” which was of no use in the anniversary sacrifice.—The institution, use, and end of this ordinance are described at large in Numb. xix., and an eminent type of Christ it was, both as to his suffering, and the continually cleansing virtue of his blood in the church. It was to be an heifer without spot or blemish, so Christ was without sin; (1 Pet. i. 18; John i. 29;) witness the purity of his nature, and the holiness of his life. A red heifer, this being the colour of guilt, (Isai. i. 18;) so the guilt of imputed sin was upon Christ. (Isai. liii. 6, 10.) An heifer on which no yoke had come; so no constraint was laid on Christ, but he offered himself willingly, “through the eternal Spirit.” The whole heifer was to be burnt in the sight of the priest; (ver. 5;) so was Christ, both in soul and body, offered up to God with the fire of love kindled in him by the same Spirit, the offering being effected by the effusion of his blood and the destruction of his flesh. The blood of the heifer was sprinkled seven times by the priest “directly before the tabernacle of

the congregation," so is the whole church purified by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. As to the manner in which the unclean were purified, see Numb. xix. 17 The ashes being gathered up, were to be kept by themselves in a clean place, that they might be used whenever needed; so Christ's sacrifice must be considered as supplying a sacred store of merit, to which the Church may have recourse from generation to generation. When use was to be made of the ashes, they were to be mingled with clean water from the spring. The water may signify the influence of the Holy Spirit, so often compared to water, and by which alone the efficacy of the Redeemer's sacrifice is applied for the purification of sin. Being so mingled, any clean person, (for it was not confined to the priests,) might dip a bunch of hyssop into it, (see Ps. li. 7,) and sprinkle any thing or person that was defiled. This ceremony of sprinkling was that by which, in all the sacrifices, their purifying efficacy was expressed. Hence the blood of Christ is termed "the blood of sprinkling," because of its efficacy for our justification and sanctification, as applied by (the water and hyssop,) the Holy Spirit and faith to our souls and consciences.—With reference to the effect produced: those who had become legally defiled, and excluded from the privilege of drawing near to God in his solemn worship, and made obnoxious to the curse of the law, were by the use of this ordinance so legally purified and cleansed, that they acquired free admission to their forfeited privileges, and were again separated to the Lord, and united to his people. So the blood of Christ, applied as above, "purges our consciences from dead works." The blood of Christ has a double effect;—towards God, in

making atonement for sin;—towards the consciences of men, in the application of its virtue to them, which is here chiefly intended. It purges them, first from guilt producing peace of conscience: (Heb. x. 19:) the blood of Christ, which satisfied the justice of God, may surely satisfy the conscience of an awakened sinner, and give him boldness in approaching God in prayer and praise, and rendering other services. And, secondly, from all defilement, as the conscience may be put by a figure, for the whole soul, with all its faculties. —

As to the certainty of this, “How much more shall the blood of Christ,” &c. We have here an argument and a comparison, the purport of which, is thus expressed by Dr. Owen: “If that which is less can do that which is less, then that which is greater can do that which is greater: provided also that *less* in what it did, was a type of that *greater* in what it was to effect.” This is the case here. In the heifer, for example, its being without blemish and the other circumstances concerning it, were all typical of Christ; the argument therefore is firm. As the ordinances and services of old, being carnal, had an efficacy towards a less good, to purify the unclean, as to the flesh, so the sacrifice of Christ will avail to a greater good, the “purifying our consciences,” &c. The force of the inference depends on the relation that was between the things which are compared in the appointment of God. Moreover there was a greater efficacy in the sacrifice of Christ with regard to the end it was to answer, than there was in those sacrifices with regard to their proper end: “*how much more* shall the blood of Christ.” For let it be observed; in the words of the author before mentioned, “all their efficacy depended on a mere arbitrary ap-

pointment, having in their own nature neither worth nor efficacy; but in the sacrifice of Christ, who ‘offered himself without spot to God,’) there is an innate glorious worth, which, suitably to the rules of eternal reason and righteousness, will procure and accomplish its effects.” The sacrifice of Christ, as to its origin, depended on the sovereign pleasure of God, but being so appointed, it had, on account of the infinite dignity of his person and the nature of his oblation, a real efficacy with respect to the holiness, justice, and wisdom of God to procure the intended end. Christ’s offering was himself; the legal offerings were only bulls and goats;—His was “without spot;” those of the law only ceremonially clean:—His was offered through the eternal Spirit; the legal by material fire:—He in his Divine person gives assurance of the effect; they could afford none, except what they derived from their typical reference to him.* — — Consider,

III. THE END OF THIS PURGATION.

“To serve,” or, as it should be rendered, *that we may serve* “the *living* God;”—so called, because he is so absolutely, he alone “hath life in himself,” and is

* It is justly observed by Macknight, “The sanctification effected by the legal rites being the sanctification of nothing but the body, it was, in a religious light, of little use, unless it was a representation and pledge of some real expiation. Now what real expiation of sin is there in the whole universe, if the sacrifice of Christ is excluded? We must therefore acknowledge that the Levitical rites which sanctified the flesh, derived their whole virtue from their being, as the Apostle affirms, figurative representations of the real atonement which Christ made for sanctifying the soul of the sinner.”

the author and cause of life to others: comparatively, with respect to idols and false gods, which are dead things, and have neither life nor operation. The epithet is used to beget faith and trust in him, as the author of temporal, spiritual, and eternal life; (2 Tim. i. 10;) to beget a due fear and reverence to him, since he lives and sees us; (Heb. iii. 12; x. 31;) to warn us of the danger of apostacy; to show us the necessity of being purged from dead works, which are not suitable to be offered to the living God, or to be practised by his worshippers. The end is,—that we may have liberty to serve him. As those purified by the ashes of the heifer had liberty of worshipping in the tabernacle, so those purged by the blood of Christ have liberty, *i. e.*, right and “boldness to enter into the holiest.” (Heb. x. 19.) —That we may have inclination, from a principle of gratitude to him, who hath provided such an atonement.—That we may have ability; supplies of grace and gifts from the Holy Spirit, (Rom. v. 1,) producing confidence, peace, hope, joy, love: hence obedience to him; and his glory is advanced in all things. (1 Cor. vi. 20; x. 31; Rom. xiv. 7.)—Such service is most acceptable. (Phil. i. 11; Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 16.) —

INFERENCES.

How destructive to the whole faith of christianity, to broach any doctrine that would vacate the efficacy of Christ’s blood!—How vain and insufficient all other ways of expiating sin, and purging our consciences before God! The sum of all false religions consisted in contrivances to accomplish this.—How certain and great the efficacy of that blood! what solid ground for

the triumph of faith! "*how much more!*" (Rom. viii. 31—39.) See similar reasoning Luke xviii. 7; xi. 5—10. — —

CCXXV

CHRIST THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT.

HEBREWS ix. 15.

For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

THE same Greek word, (*διαθήκη*), which in the former part of this, and the preceding chapter, our translators have rendered *Covenant*, they here render *Testament*; because from this place, to the end of the chapter, the inspired writer argues, as it seems, from the nature and use of a Testament among men. However, as the original word signifies both Covenant and Testament, and is taken by the Apostle in both senses, and as it is by no means agreed among learned men in which sense it is to be understood here, I shall take it in both senses, and consider,

I. THE NATURE OF THE NEW COVENANT, OR TESTAMENT.

It is a covenant of grace, in opposition to the covenant of works, or rather of justice, made with man before his fall. This latter supposed man to be innocent, righteous, and holy, and, therefore, in the enjoyment of

God's favour, and capable of continuing therein: hence it required perfect, constant, and persevering obedience; it made no provision for pardoning any sin past, removing any present sin, or affording any help for the future: as to its sanctions, it acquitted and rewarded those that complied with its conditions, and condemned and punished those that did not. The covenant of grace supposes man to be a fallen creature, guilty, depraved, and helpless, as both Scripture and experience prove him to be; utterly unable to expiate his sins, to change his sinful nature, or to do the will of God in future. Therefore, it makes provision for pardoning, renewing and strengthening him. It has conditions, however, which are very different from those of the covenant of works, viz., repentance and faith, which themselves are the gifts of God.—Hence this is distinguished from the Sinai covenant, which though typical, and shadowing forth the covenant of grace, was nevertheless, a covenant of works; and greatly clogged with ceremonies.—The blessings of the covenant stipulated, on God's part, are particularly mentioned, ch. viii. 10.—The covenant is also a testament, and the blessings are legacies, and penitent and believing souls are as it were legatees. — —

II. THE MEDIATOR, OR TESTATOR, OF THIS COVENANT OR TESTAMENT, AND WHAT HE HATH, OR DOES, PERFORM IN THE EXECUTION OF HIS OFFICE.

In general, a mediator is one who intervenes between parties at variance with each other; so Christ intervenes between offending man and an offended God, who, approaching immediately to God, by his all-sufficient merits, who renders him propitious to men, and

obtains all the gifts and blessings of salvation for them. Further Christ is called a Mediator, (μεσιτης,) on an account that is peculiar and proper to him alone, as being (μεσος) a middle person, (Σεανδρωπος,) God and man, and therefore joined to, and of the same nature with both. Thus, according to that nature which is common to us and him, having united us to himself spiritually by faith, he raises us even to God. He is a mediator on the part of God, because commissioned and employed by him, as his messenger and sponsor with men; and he is a mediator on our part, because he intercedes for us with God, and by his death reconciles us to him. Betwixt the inhabitants of earth, and God who dwells in heaven, he is a messenger and carrier of prayer from hence, and of gifts and succours from thence. To be more particular, on God's part, he is—a messenger of the Covenant, informing us respecting it, and the privileges and conditions of it; a sponsor and surety of it, engaging for God that the blessings it promises shall be conferred on the penitent and believing, and that grace to repent and believe shall be given to such as earnestly seek it; an ambassador, to propose and treat with us on conditions of peace. On the part of man, he is an atonement, intercessor, and advocate. “For this *cause* he is the mediator, that by *means of death* for the redemption of transgressions,” &c. He suffered death, the penalty due to transgression, that he might procure for his church deliverance from it, both in respect of the sins which have been committed since his death, and also of those which were committed during the former dispensation, and which could not be expiated by any of those sacrifices which belonged to the first covenant. — —

III. THE END HE HAD IN VIEW IN THIS, AND HOW THAT END MAY BE ANSWERED.

That “they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” For the nature of this inheritance, see 1 Pet. i. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 17.—On the promise of it, we observe, he could have no motive for making it, if he had not intended to fulfil it. He is able to fulfil it, such is his power. He is willing, such is his love. He certainly will fulfil it, such is his faithfulness.—The promise is made to those that “are called.” (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14; 1 Pet. i. 2; especially Rom. viii. 28.) “Called” here includes,—called, by the Gospel, to believe the truth it reveals, and receive the sanctification of the Spirit;—in consequence of obeying the Gospel call, elected or chosen;—in consequence of enduring to the end, accepted or chosen. “Many are called, but few chosen.” —

CCXXVI.

PROVISION AGAINST THE DAY OF DEATH.

HEBREWS ix. 27, 28.

As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

How eminently are the subjects revealed to us in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ calculated to awaken, and yet to cheer the mind: to produce seriousness, solemnity, and awe on the one hand, and yet

confidence, hope, and joy on the other. Surely no truths yet discovered to mankind, or that are or can be comprehended in the circle of our knowledge, are either so grand and striking, or so encouraging and consolatory; so adapted to alarm the careless sinner, or to direct and comfort the distressed penitent. We need not go far for an exemplification or proof of the truth of this observation, the passage just read being one amongst innumerable instances of it. — — Consider,

I. THE LOT APPOINTED FOR US ALL.

All men, on account of sin, are by nature and practice children of wrath, and subjected to the tremendous curse of God's violated law, the curse of temporal death, to be suffered penally, and the curse of future judgment, condemning them to perish eternally. It is "appointed," decreed, and absolutely determined of God, that sinful men shall "once die," and after that shall come to "judgment," for their sins; and, if not divinely relieved, perish for ever. (*αποκεινται*.) *It lies upon us* as an *appointment* and *determination* of God. The word equally respects both parts of the assertion, *death* and *judgment*, being both equally from the constitution of God.

Some have thought and argued, that death was so far natural from the beginning, as that, from the very frame and construction of our nature, we were liable and subject to it; and perhaps, had it not been for the tree of life, this might have been the case. Be this as it may, it is certain that without the intervention of sin, its meritorious cause, it could not actually have invaded our nature to effect its dissolution. For this would have

been contrary to the original state of our relation to God, the nature of the covenant whereby we were obliged to obedience, the promised reward, and the threatening of death in case of disobedience. The law, statute, or constitution here referred to, is recorded Gen. i. 17, iii. 19; hence (Rom. v. 12,) "It is appointed to men," to all without exception; it is their lot and portion, not merely as men, but as *sinful men*. Had it not been for sin, man would not have died, or have been removed from this world by dissolution, but probably have passed into the heavenly state by translation, as Enoch and Elijah. —

Our subjection to death implies, then,—The depravity derived from our first parents, which of itself must have been followed by death from an holy God.—Our actual transgressions. "For all have sinned." Hence death is a punishment for our own sins.—Our bodies being, as it were, poisoned and disordered by sin, are, in their very nature, infirm and corruptible, and without a miracle, must be dissolved.—This our habitation is under a curse: disorder is in the air and elements, barrenness in the earth, inundations, earthquakes, conflagrations, wars, &c.—All produce the death of men as well as beasts.

But what is death?—It is the separation of soul and body, and the dissolution of the latter, as to its senses, members, &c. The breath goeth out, the blood ceases to circulate, vital heat departs, the eyes are closed, the ears hear not, every avenue between the soul and the world is shut up, and every member lies motionless and cold.—Hence it separates us from every person and thing here below; our relations, friends, acquaintance; our property, riches, honours, the pleasures of

sense, &c.—It puts an entire and final end to our state of trial. — It brings us into the awful presence of God, and spiritual beings. in a manner of which we can now have no conception.—It determines our state and place of abode for ever.—For,

“After death the judgment.”—This is also by the same divine and unalterable constitution: “God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness,” &c. (Acts xvii. 31.) Nothing will interpose between death and judgment to make any alteration in the state or condition of any man. The souls of them that have died are yet alive; as, according to our Lord, God showed even to Moses at the bush; (Luke xx. 37;) but it appears they are incapable of any change of condition between death and judgment. Observe,—Man was at first formed after the Divine image, an intelligent, free, and accountable being, placed on earth a few days for his trial for eternity.—He is furnished with sufficient light, in whatever degrees, to know, and grace to do the will of God, whether heathen, Jew, or christian.—The judgment is to determine,—whether we have obeyed and used, or disobeyed and abused that light and grace? Whether we have received the counsel of God for our salvation, in repentance, faith, &c., or rejected it? Whether we have sought and attained justification and regeneration, and had our names in the book of life? What degrees of holiness and conformity to God we have attained?—Whether, and how far, we have laboured to be useful? What we have suffered for God and his cause, and in what spirit we have suffered? — — *Judgment* is here opposed to the salvation of believers at the second appearance of Christ, and is the general judgment of all

at the last day, and not what passes at death. *Κρίσις*, or *κριμα*. *Judgment*, used with respect to this day, signifies a condemnatory sentence only: thus in John v 29, (*αναστασις κρισεως*,) the *resurrection of judgment*. is opposed to (*αναστασις ζωης*,) the *resurrection of life*.—Now judgment, or condemnation for sin, in the righteous constitution of God, by the sentence of his law, follows after death. Nor would or could any child of man escape it, were it not for the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

This leads me to speak of,

II. THE PROVISION WHICH GOD HAS MADE TO ENABLE US TO MEET DEATH AND JUDGMENT WITH COMFORT.

“So Christ was once offered,” &c. As men must die, and every man but *once*, so Christ was to die, to suffer, to offer himself but *once*.—In the actual condition of mankind, it was necessary that Christ should suffer once for the expiation of sin, and the salvation of sinners. This relief was proportionate to the evil, the remedy to the disease. As man was to die once, legally and penally, by the sentence of God’s law, and no more; so Christ died, and was offered once, and no more, to bear sin, to expiate it, and even to take away death, so far as it was penal or a punishment. As after death men must appear to be judged, and are liable to condemnation, and could not avoid it by any thing they could do; so Christ, after his once being offered to take away sin and death, shall appear the second time to free us from judgment, and to bestow on us eternal salvation. So that we have here an entire opposition and comparison between the Law and the Gospel; the curse due to sin, and redemption by Christ.

To be more particular concerning the provision God hath made by the death of Christ.—By this he hath sealed that doctrine in which he taught the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and an eternal state of existence awaiting us.—By this he hath expiated and “put away sin,” in behalf of all that repent and believe in him; for he was “offered to bear the sins of many.” He was not only the Priest that offered, but the sacrifice that was offered; both were necessary (See 1 Pet. ii. 24.)—Hereby he hath obtained for us the Holy Spirit, to work repentance and faith in us, to break the power, and purge away the defilement of sin, to assure us of our adoption as his children, to effect our regeneration, to furnish us with a title to and a meetness for the kingdom of God.—Thus he hath made provision to remove what is most terrible in death, its sting, and to beget in us a lively hope of everlasting life.—By once dying he hath removed the evil of death, hath sanctified it to a believer, and rendered it a blessing, (Phil. i. 21,) and hath shown in what spirit we must suffer and die.—By his not perishing in death, but overcoming it and passing through it, he hath opened a way for us through the dark valley, and dreary territories of the prince of darkness.—Hereby he hath opened to us a prospect into another and better world, that we may not regret leaving this.—He hath himself passed before us into the presence of God, that he may be there to introduce us: and “hath sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” to “prepare a place for us,” to be our “Advocate with the Father,” &c.—*His second coming.*—“He shall appear,” (εφθνησεται,) *he shall be seen.* There shall be a public sight of him. “Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him.” (Rev. i. 7.) He was seen on earth in the days of his

flesh: but he is now in heaven, within the veil of that glory into which we cannot look. (Acts iii. 21.) He can indeed appear, by an extraordinary dispensation, to whom he pleaseth, as he was seen of Stephen, (Acts vii. 55,) and of Paul, (1 Cor. xv. 8;) but as to the church in general, and in the discharge of his mediatorial office, he is not seen. Thus the high priest was not seen of the people after his entrance into the holy place, until he came out again. For even concerning the person of Christ, "we live by faith. and not by sight;" and it is the great exercise of faith, to live on what Christ is doing invisibly in behalf of his church. It is also persuaded of his second appearance, and of seeing him again; (Acts i. 11;) that our "Redeemer liveth," &c. (Job xix. 25.) While he is thus invisible, the world triumphs as if he were not, and many are ready to say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Likewise the faith of many that believe in him is weak; but here is the faith and patience of the church, of all sincere believers: in the midst of discouragements, reproaches, temptations, and sufferings, they can relieve their souls with this, that their "Redeemer liveth," and that he "shall appear again the second time," at the appointed season. Hence their continual prayer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," (Rev. xxii. 20.)—As to the manner of his appearance, it will be "without sin." In his first appearance he was in himself without sin; but his great work was *about sin*. In what he had to do for us, he was "made sin," he "bore our iniquities," and was treated by God and man as the greatest sinner. He had all the penal effects and consequences of sin upon him; the distressing infirmities of nature, as fear, sorrow, grief, pain; all the sufferings sin deserved and the Law threatened. But now he shall appear perfectly free from all these things, as a perfect

conqueror over sin, in all its causes, effects, and consequences. His appearance will be so illustrious, that it will fill the whole world with its beams, and the whole rational creation of God shall behold him. “Ah! how unlike the babe of Bethlehem, the man that groaned on Calvary!”—This expression, “without sin,” may respect his church. He will then have made an utter end of sin in his whole mystical body; there shall not be the least remainder of it; all its filth, guilt, and power; and its effects in darkness, fear, and danger; shall be utterly abolished. The whole church shall then be purified, made without “spot and wrinkle,” and every way “glorious.” Sin shall be in her no more, nor its consequences. For he shall come for our full salvation of body as well as soul,—our perfect salvation; the soul and body shall then be both perfected in a manner and degree we cannot now conceive;—and for our eternal salvation.—[Explain all these particulars.]

III. TO WHOM THIS PROVISION PERTAINS, AND WHO SHALL BE BENEFITTED BY CHRIST’S SECOND APPEARING?

Not mankind in general.—Sinners, open and secret,—self-righteous persons,—formalists,—lovers of the world,—of riches, honours, pleasures, are excluded.—

It “belongs to them that look for him;” (ἀπεκδεχόμενοι;) To those who, having been enlightened to see their sinfulness and guilt, depravity, weakness and wretchedness, and being thereby humbled and brought to true repentance, have seen their need of him, and that there is salvation in him, and in no other.—To those, who have believed that he hath been “offered to bear” their sins, that he hath atoned for them, is now able to save them, and “will appear” again;—and who

have faith, lively faith, in the manner of his appearance, that it shall be “without sin,” &c., and for the complete and eternal salvation and happiness of his people. —To those who desire, long for, and delight in the thoughts of his coming: “that love his appearing.” (2 Tim. iv. 8.)—To those who live in daily expectation of it, and are daily preparing for it, retaining justifying and regenerating grace, a title to, and an increasing meetness for heaven, have “oil in their vessels, and their lamps burning,” who “give the same diligence,” and “care,” not slothful but “followers of them that inherit the promises.” (Heb. vi. 11.)—To those who are dead to all on earth, in comparison of these things, and have their “affections set on things above.”—Who, while they “hope for what they see not, with patience wait for it,” (Rom. viii. 25,)—have the love of God, and a patient waiting” for Christ,—are “patient, and establish their heart unto the coming of the Lord.” (Jam. v. 7, 8.)—Who with resignation and patience endure all the trials and difficulties of life, and seek to be made perfect through sufferings. — —

INFERENCES.

How seriously should we consider, and lay to heart the awful appointment of God, that we must “once die,” and every work we have done be brought into judgment! and how inexcusable if we do not consider it!—Being all subject to condemnation for sin, how readily and thankfully should we embrace and rely on Christ, who “was once offered to bear” our sins!—How evidently is it our duty and interest to exercise faith in his second coming, that we may be supported under all present temptations and trials. Also to think of the

great distinction which will then be made among mankind, and to inquire on which side we shall probably be found. —

CCXXVII.

SIN NOT TAKEN AWAY WITHOUT THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS x. 4—7

It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

IT is become a fashionable doctrine with many of late, that it is of little or no moment what sentiments a man entertains, on religious subjects, if he be but, as they say, *a good man*. This indeed may be true to a certain extent. There are many points of lesser importance in christianity concerning which we may “think and let think,” to use the common phrase, without any consequences particularly pernicious to ourselves or others, resulting from our difference of opinion. But if this be carried so far as to include the grand and distinguishing truths of our holy religion, especially those concerning the person and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, our law-giver, our Saviour, and our judge, and “the author and finisher of our faith,” it is a most false and dangerous position. Is it, for instance, a matter of little moment whether I consider

him as a mere man, of no higher origin than others, or acknowledge him to be ‘Immanuel, God with us,’ “God manifest in the flesh?” Can I find the same reverence for him, repose the same confidence in him, feel the same love, and yield the same obedience to him in the one case as in the other? Is it of little importance whether I consider him as making a proper atonement for sin by his death, or as only dying like a martyr, to seal the truth by his blood? Surely it is not of *little*, but of very great moment. For if he made no proper atonement for sin, it must, as an author of great judgment observes, be “an high affront to the Deity to place any hope of pardon in his sufferings and death, which would in fact be to put confidence in the cruel treatment which a man like ourselves met with in the world.” But if he did atone for sin by his death, and we are commanded to look for remission only through that atonement, and to come unto God only through him, then their condition is dangerous indeed, who reject that method of approaching God, and pour contempt on such atonement.—As I hope to be able on this occasion to prove, to your satisfaction, that the doctrine of a proper sacrifice being offered for sin by the death of Christ, is warranted by holy scripture; so I cannot but express my sorrow that this doctrine has of late been so much opposed, denied, and ridiculed, which, it is well known, it has been, and that both from the pulpit and the press. It is true, this has not been done so much by the members or clergy of the established church, (for the articles, homilies, and whole liturgy, are plainly opposed to such a practice,) as by some other denominations of christians. The leaven of Socinianism has spread so rapidly of late, as well among

some classes of dissenters in England, as in the church of Scotland, that in many places both ministers and people have almost turned their backs upon this important doctrine, maintained by their learned, pious, and renowned predecessors. — — Duty, therefore, seems to call upon all who speak in the name of God, and are concerned for the maintenance of pure and genuine christianity, to stand forth, at least occasionally, in defence of what has been considered by the church of Christ, in every age, as a fundamental doctrine of the religion of Jesus, and, as Luther says of justification by faith, which is closely connected with it, (“*Articulus stantis, vel cadentis ecclesiæ,*”) *The pillar on which the church stands, or with which it falls.*

I have chosen to make this the subject of a discourse at this time, not because I have any reason to suspect that any of you have departed from the faith in this important article, but because I judge it to be highly desirable that your minds, my christian brethren, should be deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of this doctrine, and that if it please God you may receive greater light concerning it. I may also add, that I know there are individuals, and not a few, whose views of the atonement are neither just nor satisfactory to themselves, and to these I wish to contribute my mite towards their information and establishment in this capital article of christian faith.

The words which I have just read as the foundation of my discourse, if considered in connexion with the context in particular, and with this whole epistle in general, will be found to afford an irrefragable argument in defence of the doctrine to be considered.—I shall take occasion from them to consider,

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "TAKING AWAY" OF SIN,
AND HOW IT APPEARS THAT ANY SACRIFICE IS NECESSARY
FOR THAT PURPOSE.

The phrase "to take away sin," occurs very often in scripture, and it appears, upon considering and comparing together the passages where it occurs, that its general meaning is to take away the guilt of sin, and absolve from the punishment of it. Thus Nathan's words to David, (2 Sam. xii. 13,) "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," evidently mean, He hath put away the guilt of thy sin, and hath absolved thee from the punishment due to it; as do the Seraphim's words to Isaiah, (ch. vi. 7,) "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged." (See also Isai. xxvii. 9; Zech. iii. 4.) This is the principal meaning of the expression, even when applied to Christ; as in John i. 29, and Heb. ix. 26.—It is true Christ takes away sin in another sense also: he takes away the power and dominion, and even the nature of it. And this may sometimes be the meaning of the expression, as in 1 John iii. 5, compared with the context, and with Tit. ii. 14; Eph. v. 25—27; 1 Pet. i. 14—19; Acts iii. 26. It is also of great importance our sins should be taken away in this sense. (Heb. xii. 14; Rev. xxi. 27.) But the former is chiefly intended in the text, as appears from the verses preceding and following, and especially from ver. 17, 18, where the Apostle, having quoted that promise of the new covenant, "your sins and iniquities will I remember no more," adds, "Where remission of these is there is no more offering for sin;" Christ's oblation having expiated and removed the guilt of sin, no other sacrifice is needed.

But how does it appear that any sacrifice or atonement made by blood, or by the death of any creature, is necessary to this end? I answer, this appears from the declaration of the will of God, which, as to this point, is absolute, and which neither we nor any other creature have any right to gainsay or resist. He hath clearly and fully assured us, that “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” We learn from the Jerusalem Talmud, (which is a collection of traditions with a commentary, published about 300 years after Christ,) that this was a kind of proverb among the ancients, a common saying, declarative of the general belief of mankind in those ages, most probably handed down from the times of the patriarchs, if not even from Adam. Certainly the words stand here as attesting an acknowledged truth; and need we wonder at this, considering that it has been the appointment of God in all ages that remission of sins should be obtained in this way? It is generally allowed that our first parents, after the fall, approached their justly-offended Maker, Governor, and Judge, by sacrifice, and were clothed with the skins of beasts slain for that purpose. For, as the grant was not then made to eat the flesh of animals, for what other purpose should they be killed? It is very improbable that their lives should be taken merely to obtain their skins. Be this as it will, we know that when wicked and self-righteous Cain brought to God a mere thank-offering, “of the fruit of the ground,” that “Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof;” and that “the Lord had respect to him, and his offering,” (as it evidently proceeded from a conviction, and implied a confession of his guilt, and was attended with humiliation of soul and self-abasement,) while “unto Cain

and his offering," (which neither proceeded from, nor implied any such conviction or acknowledgment,) "he had not respect." And we may ask here, whence should righteous Abel have learnt this rite, or method of sacrifice. if it had not been used by his parents? Noah also, immediately after the flood, "builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings upon the altar:" and to show us that this was not a device of his own, or an act of mere will-worship, we are assured that "the Lord smelled a sweet savour," speaking after the manner of men; that is graciously accepted, and was pleased with this way of approaching him; and in consequence of it, said, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." We find Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob frequently building altars, and offering sacrifices thereon; and in some instances, in obedience to God's express command, particularly at the time when Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness, and he was justified before God. (Gen. xv. 9.) The case of Job, who is generally supposed to have lived in those days, and at the latest, before the Sinai covenant, is perfectly similar. He "sanctified his sons, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all, saying, it may be my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts;" words which imply his persuasion that remission could not be obtained in any other way. And the divinely inspired historian assures us, "thus did Job continually." And what is still more remarkable, when Job's three friends, by their rash and uncharitable censure of that holy man, had exposed themselves to the divine displeasure, God engaged to be reconciled to them, and to forgive them only in this way.

For he said to Eliphaz, "my wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly. So they went and did according as the Lord had commanded them, and the Lord accepted Job." As to the Mosaic dispensation, I need say nothing. The sacrifices which were enjoined to be offered for trespass and sin-offerings, to make atonement, were without number and without end, on all manner of occasions, and in almost all their approaches to God in his worship. The guilty person (Lev. v. 5, 6) was to "confess that he had sinned," and to "bring his trespass-offering to the Lord, for his sin which he had sinned," and the priest was therewith to "make an atonement for him." (Lev. xvii. 11.)—God expressly prohibiting their eating blood, because he had "given it them upon the altar to make an atonement for their soul." Partly from the Israelites and ancient patriarchs, and especially from Noah, the custom descended to future ages, and was diffused into other countries; so that it became almost, if not altogether, universal; and when David describes the people of God, he characterizes them in general as "making a covenant with him by sacrifice." (Ps. l. 5.)

And here, I would observe, much may be said for this institution on the principles of reason. The most ancient way of teaching was by symbols, emblems, or hieroglyphics. God taught his people in this way from the beginning, as we find by many instances recorded in

the Old Testament. To say nothing of the tree of life, or of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which were certainly emblematical; or of the rite of circumcision, a striking picture of the mortification of carnal lusts, and of the circumcision of the heart; when God caused “an horror of great darkness to fall” upon Abram, while he was in a deep and supernatural sleep, and presented to his view a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, passing between the pieces of his divided sacrifice, did he not intend to give him a view of the deep and long distress which his posterity should suffer in Egypt, and of the fiery furnace of affliction in which God would try them, and through which, by a supernatural light and revelation, he would bring them? When he enjoined Abraham to offer his son on the altar, and afterwards gave him back to him, as though he had raised him from the dead, did he not give him a representation of that wonderful transaction when he “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,” delivered him for our offences, and raised him again for our justification? Did not Jacob’s vision of the mysterious ladder set upon the earth, and reaching to heaven, on which the angels of God ascended and descended, show him in a lively manner, how an intercourse and communication would be opened between earth and heaven by that seed of his, “in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed?” And to pass over the Jewish dispensation, which was wholly figurative, when God commanded Jeremiah to “get him a girdle and put it upon his loins,” and afterwards to “take the girdle and go to Euphrates and hide it there in a hole of the rock;” and then again, after many days, to go a second time to that river and “take the girdle from thence,”

when, "behold the girdle was marred, and it was profitable for nothing;" did he not show him that although he had made the house of Israel cleave to him as a girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, yet he would send them into captivity to Babylon, which stood on the banks of that river, and that their strength should be wasted, and their power broken? (Jer. xiii. 1.) —

Many more instances might be given, if need were, such as the same Prophet's taking a potter's earthen bottle, and breaking it in the valley of the son of Hinnom, among the ancients of the people, to represent to them that the Lord would, in a similar way, break their nation and city. (Jer. xix. 1—11; see also ch. xxvii. 2—8;) As Ezekiel's taking "a tile and laying it before him, and portraying upon it the city of Jerusalem," as besieged, and taken, and his "cutting off the hair of his head and beard with a razor," dividing it into three parts, burning a third part in the midst of the city, smiting about a third part with a knife, and scattering a third to the winds. (Ezek. iv. 1—8; and v. 1—4.) These emblems, I say, were for a similar purpose; to give the people a striking idea of the besieging and taking of Jerusalem, and of the destruction and dispersion or captivity of its inhabitants.

Just so, by sacrifices and the shedding of blood was exhibited, the guilt of mankind, and their desert of death and destruction, the great evil of sin, its odious nature and baneful consequences, in that it could not be expiated and remitted without blood; the necessity of mortifying it and the carnal principle whence it proceeds, as the animal offered for it in sacrifice was slain.— Thus a foundation was laid for confidence and hope in the penitent sinner, with respect to pardon, as the sub-

stitution of the life of the animal in the stead of the life of the sinner manifested grace, and promised forgiveness. And thus also a way was made both for condemning and pardoning sin, which were both necessary. For on the one hand, if sin be not condemned and punished, its evil cannot be manifested; nor the holiness or justice of God, or the honour of his government, be asserted, but would stand impeached before men and angels. And, on the other hand, if sin be not pardoned and taken away, the sinner must be lost. But in this way "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other." (Ps. lxxxv. 10.) But if it has been shown that blood must be shed, and sacrifices be offered, may it not suffice to offer inferior animals? This leads me to consider,—

II. THAT THE BLOOD OF BULLS AND GOATS IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO TAKE AWAY SIN.

In the words of the text, it is expressly declared, that they cannot take away sin, and therefore we may be sure they cannot. And the reason is plain. Although they might, in some faint degree, as a "shadow," and the outlines of a picture, manifest the particulars just mentioned; yet, not in so adequate manner, and in such lively colours as "the very image of the things." For instance, they could not show, in a clear and convincing manner, the great evil of sin, and its destructive tendency. For it might be demanded, What great evil can there be in it, if it can be expiated and done away by the death of lambs and sheep, or other brute animals? They could not show the great depravity of mankind in committing sin, and the punishment they deserved, and should meet with in the eternal world,

if they lived and died under its guilt and power. Much less could these sacrifices demonstrate the infinite purity of the divine nature, his irreconcilable hatred to sin, his displeasure against the sinner, and resolution to punish him, unless he sought forgiveness and holiness in the way God had appointed: nor could they maintain the honour and dignity of the divine government over his intelligent and free creatures.

Let it be observed further, that as the brute creatures are not of the same nature and original with man, whose sins are to be taken away, their death for man could not dissolve the obligation of death which man's nature had incurred. For being irrational, and of very inferior nature to man, the lives of ten thousand of them were not worth the life of one man, even if man had not been immortal. "In satisfaction to justice, by way of compensation for injuries," says a late writer, "there must be a proportion between the injury and the reparation, that justice may be as much exalted and glorified in the one as it was depressed and debased in the other. But there could be no such proportion between the affront put on the righteousness of God by sin, and the reparation by the blood of bulls and goats, of sheep and oxen." If a nobleman forfeit his head by high treason, will his giving up his flocks and herds to be slaughtered, expiate his offence, and satisfy the laws and government of his country? Surely not: and much less could the lives of these inferior creatures ransom the lives of all men. Add to this, that they are wholly mortal, and man, as to his better part, immortal: and it was in the nature of things impossible their merely temporal lives should ransom the eternal lives of all men. Nor could they, being in their mortal nature,

overcome death, or procure for man a resurrection from the dead.

But it will be inquired here, Why did God appoint the sacrifices of beasts, if they had no virtue? I reply—They had virtue to answer the end of their appointment. They purified the flesh from what the ceremonial law deemed defilement, and procured for those that offered them a right to the benefits of the Mosaic dispensation, viz. access to God in his worship, communion with his people in his ordinances, and various temporal blessings in the land of Canaan. They could not, however, so expiate sin, or purify the conscience from a sense of the guilt of it, as to obtain for the sinner, although penitent, either peace with God, or peace of mind; much less a title to, or a meetness for, the heavenly inheritance.—They answered a valuable end in continually representing to sinners the curse and sentence of the law, or that death was the wages due to sin. For although, as a judicious divine observes, “there was allowed in them a commutation, that the sinner himself should not die, but the beast sacrificed in his stead, yet they all bore witness to this sacred truth, that it is ‘the judgment of God that they that commit such things are worthy of death.’ He lets no sin pass without a representation of his displeasure against it, although mixed with mercy, and directing to relief against it, in the blood of the sacrifice.” Those sacrifices were not in vain, because they were typical of the sacrifice of Christ, which in due time was to be offered. Indeed the whole Mosaic dispensation was figurative and emblematical: the “holy places made with hands were but figures of the true,” as the author of this epistle tells us, ch. ix. 24; and the priests, under that dis-

pensation, “served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,” that is, of things belonging to the gospel church on earth and in heaven; (ch. viii. 5;) and the law in general being “a shadow,” or shadowy representation, “of good things to come,” although not “the very” and express “image,” or perfect delineation, of the things.

And as the sacrifices of inferior animals could not expiate nor take away sin. so neither could human sacrifices, I mean the sacrifices of any ordinary man or number of men. For no sinful man (and all men are sinful,) could suffer more than the punishment he had deserved to suffer for his own sins; and it is evident, as Dr. Whitby observes, “no satisfaction can be made by me for others, by suffering that which justice requires me to suffer for my own offences.” Again, “No mere man,” as he observes further, “could overcome death,” or obtain for himself, and much less for others, redemption from it. For no mere man could voluntarily lay down his life, and take it again. Nor could any human sacrifice answer the ends of justice in punishing sin, or requiring an atonement for it, that is, could manifest God’s holiness, and righteousness, and his infinite hatred to sin; so show its evil nature and destructive consequences, as to deter mankind from it, “more than the criminal himself would do by his own sufferings. For what great indication would it be of the evil of sin, and of God’s hatred to it, that he required only the death of a mortal man,” or of a few mortal men, “to expiate the sins of the whole world? or what discouragement could this afford to sinners from continuing in their evil course? what great dread of the Divine vengeance?” or what reverence and obedience to the Divine

law could it produce for God to require only one criminal, or a few criminals, for all are criminals, “to suffer less than he himself,” or they deserved, to make atonement for the continual violations of his sacred laws, by a whole nation, or even by the whole world? It appears, therefore, that “no man can redeem his brother, or give unto God a ransom for him.” For “the redemption of the soul is precious.” is of immense value, and “it ceaseth for ever” to be in the province or power of any mere man, or any number of the human race. (Ps. xlix. 7, 8.) This brings us to consider,

III. THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST, THE ONLY SACRIFICE WHICH IS, OR COULD BE, SUFFICIENT.

Respecting this, two particulars demand our consideration.—How does it appear that Christ offered himself as a sacrifice? That Christ offered himself as a sacrifice for sin appears from many clear and unequivocal testimonies of the Holy Scriptures. Isaiah is express upon this subject. “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.—He was wounded for our transgressions,—the chastisement of our peace was upon him,—the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,” &c. (Isai. liii. 4—11.) The Messiah “shall be cut off,” says Daniel, “but not for himself.” For whom then, or for what is he cut off? We are told in a preceding verse, “To finish the transgression,” viz., the first great transgression, the “one offence;” by which “judgment came upon all men to condemnation,” to expiate its guilt, and to procure for man grace to stem that torrent of corruption, which it hath entailed upon us; “to make an end of sins,” of actual sins, to take away the

guilt, and power, and defilement of these also; “to make reconciliation for iniquity,” and make peace between man and God; and “to bring in everlasting righteousness,” that is, his own obedience unto death, as a ground of confidence and hope for present and everlasting salvation to all mankind. (Dan. ix. 24—26.)—Accordingly, the Apostle assures us that God “made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” and that he “set him forth,” (προεθετο,) *exhibited* and manifested him “to be a propitiation,” (ιλαστηριον,) *a propitiatory or mercy-seat*, &c.; that he was “delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification;” that he “loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet-smelling savour.” The author of this epistle is yet more express, if more can be, affirming, that, “once in the end of the world,” (επι συντελειαι των αιωνων,) *at the conclusion of the ages*, meaning the last of the *dispensations* God ever intended to afford mankind, “he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;” that he “was once offered to be the sins of many;” that “after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, he for ever sat down on the right-hand of God;” and that “by one offering he hath perfected ever them that are sanctified,” having done all that was requisite in order to their perfect reconciliation with God, and their final and everlasting salvation.

The same truth appears from the very nature of the priesthood. “Every priest taken from among men, says the author of this epistle, (ch. v. 1,) “is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.” Wherefore “it is necessary that this man have somewhat also to offer.”

or "it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, at he might be a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (Heb. ii. 17.) But what had he to offer? Surely nothing but his own body; for we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all." (Heb. x. 10.) He "bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" (1 Pet. ii. 24;) and "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. xiii. 12.) Or rather he offered his whole person, his soul as well as his body. For his *soul*, as well as his body, was made an offering for sin; (Is. li. 10;) and "through the eternal Spirit he offered *himself* without spot to God." (Heb. ix. 14; and see ch. vii. 7.) Now as certainly as the Jewish priests offered real sacrifices for sin, and not mere thank-offerings, so certainly did the High-Priest of our profession offer one real sacrifice for sin, and thereby expiate, or make atonement for it, which when he had done, he "for ever set down on the right hand of God, henceforth expecting all his enemies be made his footstool. (Heb. x. 12, 13.)

The same important doctrine may be proved also from the many passages of Scripture, which speak of his "giving himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity;" his "dying for the ungodly;" "dying for us whilst we were yet sinners;" dying "for all when we were dead;" "dying for our sins, according to the scriptures;" "giving himself a ransom for many;" (Matt. xx. 28;) "a ransom for all;" (1 Tim. ii. 6;) and offering "the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God." "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we received the atonement." (Rom. v. 11.) If these and such like passages do not

with themselves, and wrest the Scriptures, I pray God it may not be to their own destruction.

But we inquire, 2dly,—How does it appear that this sacrifice is sufficient and available? It appears from the solemn and express declarations of the inspired penmen. “The pleasure of the Lord,” says Isaiah, “shall prosper in his hands: he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” “By his knowledge (that is by the knowledge of him,) shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” (Isai. liii. 10, 11.) “He gave himself,” says St. Paul, “an offering and a sweet smelling savour.” “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.” (Eph. v. 2; 2 Cor. v. 19.) “Christ being come an High-priest of good things to come, by his own blood entered in once into the holy place.” “For if the blood of bulls and of goats,” &c. (Heb. ix. 11—14.)—“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us,” saying, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord.”—“Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.” Now where remission of these is, there is “no more offering for sin.” (Heb. x. 14—18.) Now these declarations of God in his word are a sufficient reason, if we could assign no other, why we should believe this sacrifice to be sufficient. Whatever sacrifice our offended Sovereign deems sufficient, must be so. “By the which will we are sanctified, by the offering of the body of Christ once for all.” (Ver. 10.) But let it be observed further, this is not an arbitrary appointment. His will, in this case, is holy, just, and wise.

The sacrifice of Christ must appear sufficient, in the very nature of things, to all who weigh, without prejudice, the following particulars.—He was himself perfectly free from sin. He had no sins of his own to suffer for, and therefore the whole merit of his sufferings was applicable to our benefit.—He was eminently holy, and adorned with all possible graces and virtues, even as to his human nature, above all that ever lived. If considered merely as man, it is certain that in largeness of mind, depth of knowledge and wisdom, ardour of love, and in the perfection of universal holiness and righteousness, he far exceeded not only all other men, but all creatures in the universe.—It must be recollected that, even as man, he was of no common origin, but was of miraculous conception, and immediately from God.—Moreover, he was God as well as man. His human nature was so intimately and indissolubly united to the Divine, that both natures made but one person. He was therefore of infinite dignity and worth: of more worth than the whole human race, and in fact than all creatures. Add to this, the extremity of his sufferings in the garden and upon the tree, in his body and in his soul; such as God, in his infinite holiness and justice, deemed a sufficient compensation for the affront which, by our sins, we had put upon his attributes; the contempt we had poured on his law, and the injury we had done to his government.—All the ends of the punishment of sin were hereby answered. Its infinite evil and destructive tendency is evinced more than by the drowning of the old world, or raining upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone. Sin does far greater mischief,—it crucifies the Son of God, the Lord of glory. Though it was only imputed

to him, it brings such misery and anguish upon him, that the earth trembles, the heaven grows dark, the rocks rend, the graves open, the dead are raised.—The Divine holiness and justice, his infinite hatred to sin, and resolution to punish it, are fully manifested. He “spares not his own Son.” The punishment of sin is shown to be insupportable and inevitable to the impenitent and unbelieving sinner, who rejects this sacrifice. When only imputed to Christ, and he could have no consciousness of personal guilt, it was *insupportable* to him. Mark the consternation of his soul, his bloody sweat, an angel sent to strengthen him! How much more insupportable will it be to those who are conscious of having committed it, and lie for ever under the burden of it! It will be also *inevitable*. He that spared not his own Son, innocent, holy as he was, will he spare enemies, rebels, who are guilty and filthy, and will not come to him that they may have life?—The necessity of mortifying sin is hereby most clearly and forcibly declared.—The certain pardon of sin to those who repent and believe, is also made manifest and proclaimed. — —

In the way of inference from the whole, it appears from hence, that sin is not a trifling matter, to be laughed at, and made a mock of. “Fools make a mock of sin.” Can we think lightly of, or turn into an occasion of laughter, the extreme sufferings of the Son of God?—We must learn to revere the infinite holiness, purity, and justice of God, his holy law, the rights of his government, how awful! how tremendous!—We must see to it that we do not reject this atonement, observing what will be the consequence if we do.—How dreadful the punishment! (Heb. ii. 3; x. 26—29;

xii. 25.)—Finally, let us learn our obligations to the Lord Jesus, to love and serve him: the willingness wherewith he came down to offer himself a sacrifice for us, the depth of his humiliation, the intenseness of his sufferings for us, and the incalculable benefits resulting to us therefrom,—all unite to render our obligation to him immeasurably great. (2 Cor. v. 14.) —

CCXXVIII.

CHRISTIANS PERFECTED BY THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS x. 14.

By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

It will be readily allowed by a congregation professedly christian, that every doctrine clearly and explicitly taught in the Gospel is of deep importance, and that nothing revealed therein should be overlooked or despised. For every thing there taught was delivered not only by the Prophets and Apostles, who spoke by inspiration of God, but by Him who was the wisdom, word, and truth of God incarnate. Some truths of christianity, however, are of greater importance than others, hold a more prominent place, and therefore demand greater attention. Such is that of the expiation of sin through the sacrifice of the Messiah. To foretell and shadow forth this, many typical persons were raised up in the ancient church, and myriads of lambs, goats, and bullocks were slaughtered, and seas of blood flowed round their altars. Sin-offerings, peace-offer-

ings, trespass-offerings, and burnt-offerings, were presented without end. This indeed is the principal subject of the law of Moses. So important was the shadow; but how much more must be the substance! how much more important the doctrine of this chapter! the whole of which is comprehended in our text.—Let me call your attention to

I. THE “ONE OFFERING” HERE MENTIONED.

This is the offering of Christ himself, (ch. ix. 14,) in opposition to the offering of lambs, &c. These were appointed to be offered of old, to show the offerer his guilt and desert of death, the great evil of sin, which could not otherwise be pardoned, consistently with the Divine perfections, and the rights of his moral government, &c.; and therefore to manifest the infinite purity of the Divine nature, to show the necessity of mortifying and slaying the principle of sin in the heart, as the sacrificed animal was put to death, to intimate that, as God accepted the life of the animal instead of the life of the sinner, he was not unwilling to give pardon and peace to the penitent and believing. These sacrifices were also a tax upon sin, the person that sinned, in certain cases, being subjected to the expense of slaying his sheep, bullocks, &c. These sacrifices, however, “could not take away sin,” or fully answer the ends just mentioned.* Christ, therefore, offered himself “to bear the sin of many,” (ch. ix. 28,) indeed of all, according to Isaiah. (Ch. liii. 6.)

In respect of the manner in which God laid our sins upon him, he imputed them to him, laid them to his charge, made him answerable for them; (Isai. liii. 7,

* See preceding Plan.

in Hebrew;) made “his soul” guilty; (ver. 10;) he was indeed *not guilty*, but innocent, perfectly so, (2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. vii. 26,) yet was he accounted or treated as guilty, “made sin for us;” the chastisement or punishment of sin was laid upon him; (Isai. liii. 5;) that punishment which, while it expiated sin, and made way for the pardon of it, consistently with the Divine perfections, might also manifest its infinite evil and destructive tendency, God’s hatred of it, and determination not to let it pass unpunished. — But inasmuch as no mere bodily sufferings could do this, therefore his soul was made an offering for sin. (Isai. liii. 10.) The account which the Evangelists gave of his sufferings in the garden makes this manifest. If we compare the expressions in the different Gospels one with another, we shall perceive there was something most uncommon and extraordinary in those sufferings.—As to the sufferings of his body, we are told, “he bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” (1 Pet. ii. 24.) [Describe his bodily sufferings, and the tremendous scene on Calvary.] — —

II. THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY THIS ONE OFFERING.

“He hath perfected,” &c.—Whom? “Them that are sanctified.”—Separated from profane and common use, as the tabernacle, its vessels, priests, garments, &c., are said to have been sanctified;—separated from sinners and sin, to be no longer under its power, and employed by it; not to have our faculties, or any of them, instruments of unrighteousness, or used in any common way, as those of worldly people are, but to be disengaged from the world and its ways:—consecrated to God in heart and life, soul and body, faculties and

members, time and talents:—employed for God; doing his will in all things, aiming at his glory, striving to promote it in matters temporal as well as spiritual:—inwardly changed, converted, regenerated, created anew “having put off the old man and put on the new.” (Eph. iv. 22—24.) —

We are thus sanctified, not without, but through “the one offering;”—sanctified by God’s word; (Jam. i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23; John viii. 32; xv. 3; xvii. 17;) to every part of which Christ’s death and sacrifice gives weight and efficacy, showing its infinite moment as well as certain truth; (John xviii. 37;)—sanctified by the Spirit, (1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 13,) which Christ’s offering procures for us; (John xvi. 7;)—sanctified by faith; (Acts xxvi. 18; xv. 9;) Christ’s death and sacrifice being the chief foundation and object of it. —

In what sense hath Christ perfected such?—He hath perfected their justification, reconciliation, and acceptance with God, and that both before God in reality, and in their own consciences, which could not be done by the law, (ch. vii. 19; ix. 9; x. 1,) but is effectually done by the offering of Christ. (Rom. v. 6—10; viii. 33, 34.)—He hath hereby obtained for them perfect holiness, another grand end of his sacrifice. (1 Pet. ii. 24; Tit. ii. 14; Col. i. 21, 22.) But how is his sacrifice calculated to produce this? This perfect holiness is promoted by the doctrine of the Gospel, (Eph. iv. 11—15,) by faith in, and obedience to, that doctrine; (Acts xv. 9; 1 Pet. i. 22;) and Christ’s sacrifice demonstrating the truth and importance of it, lays a foundation for that faith, and enforces that obedience. Perfect holiness is the effect of the fulness of the Spirit, and this is communicated through Christ’s atonement.

(John vii. 39.)—It is obtained by confidence in the mercy and grace of God; (Gal. iii. 13, 14; Heb. iii. 6, 14,) Christ's sacrifice is the ground of that confidence.—It is by a persuasion of the love of God to us, which produces love to God in return, (1 John iv. 16—19,) and Christ's offering produces or shows the reasonableness of that persuasion. (1 John iv. 9, 10.)—It is by hope, (1 John iii. 3,) and this is produced by Christ's sacrifice. (Rom. v. 2, 5—10; viii. 30, 32.—It is by desire after, and love to holiness, (Matt. v. 6,) thus dearly purchased by the sufferings of Christ.—By mortifying of our corruptions, in conformity with the death of Christ. (Rom. vi. 3—12; Gal. ii. 20.)—It implies perfect resignation, (Isai. liii. 7: Matt. xxvi. 42—44.) and patience under all the Divine dispensations, in imitation of Christ:—Perfect meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering, amidst reproaches and ill-usage, of which he showed so perfect an example in his sufferings: (1 Pet. ii. 19—23:)—Benevolence and love to the children of God, (1 John iv. 7, 8,) and to all men, constraining us to pity those who are in ignorance, sin, and misery, and to labour diligently to save them. (2 Cor. v. 13, 14,) their redemption having cost so much:—Liberality and bounty to the indigent, for which the death of Christ affords so powerful a motive: (2 Cor. viii. 9; 1 John iii. 16—19:)—Deadness to the world, (Gal. vi. 14,) and to sin, the infinite evil of which Christ's atonement discovers.—Devotedness to God and Christ, to which his sacrifice and death is the greatest inducement: (2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Rom. xiv. 7—9:)—Watchful, jealous, fear and care. (1 Pet. i. 17—20; 2 Cor. vii. 1.)

CCXXIX.

THE LIFE OF THE JUST ATTAINED AND
CONTINUED BY FAITH.

HEBREWS X. 38.

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

THE former part of this important sentence, first found, with very little variation, in the prophecy of Habakkuk, (ch. ii. 4,) occurs several times in St. Paul's epistles, being quoted from that Prophet, to show that salvation, in all its branches, is "by grace through faith." By this it appears that the Apostle judged them to contain not only a certain but an important truth,—a truth worthy of universal attention, and which could not well be brought too frequently into view. It is true, the words do not mean precisely the same in the prophecy of Habakkuk, which they do in the writings of St. Paul; or rather they are applied to a different purpose. Habakkuk meant that the just should be preserved by their faith from the over-spreading destruction about to come upon Judea, from the Chaldeans; but St. Paul meant that the just should be preserved by their faith from their spiritual enemies, and from that everlasting destruction to which sin had exposed us all, and from which there is no salvation in any other way. For salvation, whether of a spiritual or temporal nature, is by faith and grace, and cannot otherwise be attained,—But inquire we,

I. WHO ARE MEANT BY "THE JUST."

The word here rendered “just,” (*δικαιος*), properly means *righteous*. None are righteous by nature, (Rom. i. 11—20;) it is the supernatural gift of God (Rom. v. 7.) That we may be made righteous, we must be enlightened to see, and awakened to feel this. We must be justified, or accounted righteous; (Rom. iii. 22;) be regenerated; (Eph. iv. 21—24;) made obedient; (Luke 6; 1 John iii. 7.)—

II. WHAT IS THE FAITH WHEREBY SUCH LIVE.

The faith here spoken of, is that so well defined, and so much celebrated in this epistle, particularly ch. xi. Its objects are things invisible, spiritual, and eternal, God and his attributes, his revealed will, and especially Jesus Christ and the promises in him.—[Consult Plan 158, Vol. v. p. 155, and Plan 178, Vol. vi. p. 5.]

III. HOW THEY LIVE BY THIS FAITH.

By this they are made righteous. By faith in things not seen, in God and the eternal world, they are awakened; by faith in the Divine revelation and its doctrines, they are enlightened; by faith in Christ, and the doctrine of justification through him, they are justified; by faith in Christ, and in the promise of the influences of the Spirit through him, they are regenerated and sanctified; by faith in the love of God through Christ, and the doctrine of a future reward according to our works, they are made loving, obedient, patient, zealous, &c. — —

By this they “live,” for they are not “dead in trespasses and sins,” in a “carnal mind,” dead to God and Divine things, as before, (Col. ii. 13; Eph. ii. 1,) but are quickened and “raised up together with Christ,”

(Eph. ii. 1, 5; Col. ii. 12,) and put in possession of spiritual life, consisting in the favour of God, in union with him, and an heavenly mind. (Eph. iv. 18; Rom. viii. 5, 6.) This life they live in contemplation of God's glory, desire after him, delight in him, communion with him.—They live a holy life, having dominion over sin, (Rom. vi. 14; 1 John iii. 4; and v. 18,) and deadness to it; (Rom. vi. 2;) to the world, (1 John v. 4; Gal. vi. 14;) to ourselves; (Gal. ii. 20;) devotedness to God, and a conformity to him.—A useful life, being possessed of that love which “worketh no ill” to any one, (Rom. xiii. 10,) which induces us to do good, as we have ability and opportunity, to all.—A happy life; a life of confidence in, and dependance upon God for all things: implying freedom from an accusing conscience, from slavish fears of God, and distressing apprehensions of death and hell, or “of evil tidings;” a release from care and anxiety. Hence follow peace and tranquility of mind; a hope of immortality, joy in that hope, in a good conscience, and in communion with God, and an earnest of heaven.—A wise life, pursuing the best possible end of human existence, the glory of God, in our own present and eternal salvation, by the only means: not “walking in a vain shadow;” (Ps. xxxix. 6;) not directing our views, desires, cares, and pursuits to this unsatisfactory, uncertain, and transitory state of things, but to that which is to come.

IV THE DANGER OF NOT PERSEVERING, AND THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES THEREOF, OR THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING TO LIVE BY FAITH.

As, through the not considering and weighing well the evidences of the truth, or the goodness, excellency, and utility of the things proposed as the objects of faith, we may continue in our natural unbelief, and never begin this spiritual life, so after we have begun, we may decline from it. “If *he*,” that righteous man, who lived by faith, “draw back,” &c. This implies the possibility.—Through our regard to visible and temporal things, our faith in, and sense of the spiritual and eternal world may be weakened, and our concern about everlasting salvation die away.—Through the suggestions and sophisms of infidelity, our faith in Divine revelation, and the effects of it, may be destroyed. Through the insinuations of error our belief of the leading truths of the Gospel may be shaken and overthrown, and the influence of these truths cease.—Through self-righteousness, or Antinomianism, or formality, or lukewarmness, our reliance on Christ, and life in him, may become void.—Through yielding to the corruption of our nature, and the love of sin, our faith in the promises of God, and the sanctification consequent thereon, may be inefficient.—Through neglect of watchfulness, or of self-denial, the Spirit, which inspires and maintains faith and its fruits, may be withdrawn.—Through neglect of the means which nourish the christian life, as the word of God, prayer, christian fellowship; through formality in these means, or through the fear of persecution, trials, and difficulties, that life may languish and decay. As to the evil consequences—“My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” God has “pleasure” and satisfaction in those that persevere and make progress in the life of faith: in others, the reverse. — —

[Apply from ver. 39. "We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." And show the strong ground which is given for confidence in respect of the perseverance of those who "continue in the faith." (Col. i. 23; Phil. i. 6.; Ps. ciii. 17, 18; Jer. xxxii. 40; John x. 28—30; Rom. viii. 35.)— —]

CCXXX.

THE DEATH OF FRIENDS A WARNING TO SURVIVORS.

HEBREWS. xi. 4.

—He being dead yet speaketh.

IN this chapter the Apostle illustrates his doctrine concerning the nature, necessity, and excellency of faith by a variety of striking examples. Among these, that of Abel is not the least remarkable. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." From the book of Genesis we learn that Abel brought unto God "the firstlings of his flock." By this offering, this sacrifice, he confessed himself to be a guilty creature, who deserved death for his sins, in token of which he slew his lamb in sacrifice. Hereby also he declared his faith in the future "Seed of the woman," who was to "bruise the serpent's head," by offering himself up a sacrifice to incensed justice for our sins, and who was typified by all the lambs slain from the foundation of the world. And by the same transaction Abel signified his confidence of par-

don and salvation through the Mediator, whom his sacrifice represented; and thus he "by faith offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." For Cain, on the other hand, brought only of the "fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." This (it must be granted) implied an acknowledgment, whether in sincerity and humility we have reason to doubt, that God was the Governor of the world, and the giver of all good things, and that thanks were due to him from his rational creatures. But then, no animal being sacrificed, he made no confession of guilt, much less did he profess any faith in the future Saviour of the world. Indeed, it seems, he presented a mere thank-offering, in a spirit of pride, self-confidence, and unbelief, something like the prayer of the Pharisee, which was in reality no prayer, but an empty boast of his own self-righteous performances. Whereas Abel, when he stabbed his victim, in effect smote upon his breast, like the publican, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" being persuaded he could obtain mercy only through that atonement which God should provide. And accordingly, like him, "he went to his house (or tent) justified." For the Apostle adds, "He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." St. Paul alludes to the declaration of the sacred historian, who tells us, "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." He had respect unto his offering, and considered it as a type of his Son, for whose sake he had respect unto Abel,—accepting, through the Mediator, his humble repentance and lively faith. And he, moreover, gave him an evidence of his acceptance, doubtless from the Spirit of adoption, shedding abroad the love of God in his heart. Thus, probably, he "obtained

witness," as the Apostle expresses it, "that he was righteous, God, in the mean time, testifying of his gifts," perhaps by sending fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice. "By it," the Apostle adds, that is, by his *faith* leading him to sacrifice in this manner, "he, being dead, yet speaketh." He declares to us, that in order to acceptance with God, we must humbly and penitently confess our guilt and desert of damnation, must renounce all confidence in ourselves, and must put our whole trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." And, though dead, he "yet speaketh," that if we walk in this way, God will have respect unto us, will justify us, and give us a testimony of our justification. We shall *obtain witness* that we are righteous. "The Spirit of God (will) bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," and he will also testify his acceptance of our gifts, our various services, which we do for his name's sake, by lifting up "the light of his countenance" upon our souls, shedding his "love abroad in our hearts," and "filling us with joy and peace through believing."

Thus Abel, being dead, yet speaketh; and in this manner he hath spoken from the age in which he lived until now. But alas! few have been inclined to hearken to him, or at least to imitate the example he hath given. You, my brethren, have long heard him speak this language; though I fear, with regard to many of you, to little advantage. For, notwithstanding the doctrine of Abel, you still go on worshipping in your own way, the way of Cain, of impenitence, unbelief, pride, and self-righteousness; being either wedded to your sins, or laying your own supposed good works as the

foundation of your acceptance with God. To draw you from this dangerous and destructive way, since Abel is not regarded, God hath compassionately sent another to warn you, who for this purpose, like him, "being dead, yet speaketh." And as he was born and brought up amongst you, and was well known to many of you, and even related to not a few of you, it is hoped you will pay more regard to his message than you have to that of Abel, who being so far removed, as to time and place, from you, is personally a stranger to you all.

Our deceased brother, whose much-lamented death hath given occasion to our present meeting, not only spoke to us by his edifying example while he *lived*, and by his encouraging words and behaviour when he died, but, "being dead, yet speaketh." I am not about to attempt an elaborate panegyric upon the deceased, which would answer no valuable end; but if a plain statement of his christian experience and character be calculated to do you good, it may be well to relate it, not for his praise, but to the praise of the grace of God, and for your benefit.

[The author having then described how the example of the deceased youth spoke during his life-time, particularly by his behaviour in the several domestic relations, he proceeds as follows.]

The sudden and unexpected death of this youth speaketh—

To all parents whose children are yet spared to them, an important word of advice. While it blames them not, but rather commends them, for bestowing attention on the education of their children, preparing them for the station they are to fill in after-life, and providing for their wants in this world, it urges upon

them the far more important duty of doing what lies in them to provide for the everlasting well-being of their children, by making them christians, bringing them to be acquainted with the evidences of divine revelation,—instructing them in the contents thereof, the truths to be believed, the graces to be experienced, the privileges to be enjoyed, the duties to be performed; showing and impressing on their minds the infinite importance of these things; not resting till their minds and hearts are properly impressed, and they do actually believe, experience, and practise them.

To brethren and sisters that live in the same family. While it strongly recommends their living in peace and love the little while they are together, it also urges the vast importance of their not hindering, but helping one another in the best things, considering they know not how soon they may be separated, and see one another no more till they meet at the judgment-seat of Christ, or in the eternal world;—and if they be soon parted, they may meet with joy, and not with grief.—To more distant relations and friends, who are in the habit of frequently or occasionally seeing and conversing with each other. They should think every opportunity of this kind may be the last, and should improve it accordingly.—To all that dwell in houses of clay, “whose foundation is in the dust,” it preaches, “Man that is born of a woman is of a few days,” &c. (Job xiv. 1.) Methinks the voice of this dispensation is like the voice which Isaiah mentions as crying in the wilderness. (Isai. xl. 6—8.)

“It bids us look on men as autumn leaves,
And all they bleed for, as the summer dust,
Driven by the whirlwind.”—

“Arise, depart,” it says, “this is not your rest,” &c. “Love not the world.” (John ii. 15—17.)—“Seek the things which are above.” (Col. iii. 1.) “You have here no continuing city,” &c.—It teaches, therefore, our uncertain tenure of every thing here:—that we hold all by a slender tie—a rotten thread.—The unreasonableness of glorying in, or valuing ourselves on any thing here, any thing which we possess only through our union with the body—not only riches, honours, beauty, but genius, discernment, judgment, taste, learning, knowledge. For “when the grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth.”—The unreasonableness and folly of placing any dependance on our youth, or health, or strength, and on that ground promising ourselves long life.—The unreasonableness and folly of deferring our repentance and conversion to God to old age, or declining years, or even middle age, which may never come.—The still greater folly of deferring it till we are on a dying bed, since we may be taken off by some sudden stroke, and never come there; or we may be delirious, or be so oppressed with pain and weakness as to be utterly incapable of doing any thing for our souls.—It speaketh: it urgeth the importance and necessity of being ready, always ready, for death, judgment, and eternity. (Matt. xxiv. 44.)

But how may we be ready? As death removes us from all below, to be ready for it, we should not be inordinately or immoderately attached to any thing on earth; neither to riches, honours, nor pleasures, to health or life; to relatives nor friends; but sit loose, in a great degree, from all things and persons. As death puts a period to our time of trial, and places us in a state of final retribution, to be prepared for it, we must

see that we answer the end for which we were placed in such a state, the end of our creation, preservation, and redemption, of our illumination by the Gospel; we must see that, by obeying the call of God, and sincerely turning to him, we choose life and the blessing, in preference to death and the curse; that we confirm and adhere to that choice; that we walk worthy of it, and adorn it; that we make a right use of our privileges, advantages, time and talents.—As death removes our spirits into the invisible and eternal world, we must send our thoughts, affections, cares, labours, pursuits, before us to that world; must transmit our heart and treasure (which cannot be separated) to that world; and must “lay up a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.”—As death brings us, in a peculiar sense, into the presence of God, to meet his smile or frown, to partake of his favour, or feel the effects of his wrath; to be ready for this implies, that we be savingly acquainted with him. (Job xxii. 21; John xvii. 3; 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.) That we be reconciled to him; conformed to his image; possessed of his nature: that we enjoy communion and fellowship with him, and thus have an earnest of heaven in our hearts.—After death is the judgment. We must therefore seek that we have an interest in the judge, that he be not our enemy, but our friend; that we well consider and comply with the terms on which our final acquittal will turn; that we have our names in the book of life; that we be not in our sins, past or present, but pardoned and renewed; that we have shown our faith by our works; for he will “render to every man according to his deeds.” (Rom. ii. 6; Rev. xxii. 12.) In short, “that we be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” (2 Pet. iii. 14.) —

Death often comes unexpectedly and suddenly. Therefore, we must not delay our preparations for it till we are settled in life, or have adjusted our affairs, or finished this or that business; nor to “a more convenient season;” nor till another year, or week, or day. For, “Behold now is the accepted time.” “To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” “Acquaint now thyself with God.”—While you have life, health, the use of reason and memory, can understand, judge, remember your sins and become penitent, God’s mercies and be grateful: while you can know, consider, and comply with the terms of salvation, give your minds and your wills, &c.—While God calls you by his mercies and judgments, sends messengers to invite, urge, and warn, and death is suddenly and unexpectedly snatching away so many. —

Various motives may be suggested to excite to this duty.—If you are found unprepared, as the foolish virgins, it will be too late to prepare when the last summons comes. You will then indeed have time enough—an eternity to repent in—but in vain!—When prepared, you will be in peace: death will have nothing terrible: Christ will be your friend. “To live” will be “Christ, and to die gain.” You will have one heaven in possession, and be sure of another. —

He speaketh to different ages and characters.—To young sinners. This event peculiarly addresses you. Our departed friend was young, healthy, strong, &c. But “as a flower of the grass (so) he passed away.” (Jam. i. 10, 11; Ps. ciii. 15.) And it may be so with you. “Rejoice,” this event says, “O young man, in thy youth,” &c. “but know,” on the testimony of God, of conscience, of Scripture, of Solomon, of all good

men, and thousands of bad ones,—“that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.” For all the vanity of thy *heart*, thine *eye*, and *life*.— For all the loss of time, and mis-employment of talents; for thy contempt of his word, and ordinances, and Gospel blessings.—For all the hurt thou dost to religion, to thy own soul, and the souls of others: for health and strength, &c. abused, and money squandered; for crucifying Christ afresh; for grieving, quenching, resisting the Holy Spirit.—“God,” who knows, sees, remembers all these things, is every where, even in the chamber of thy heart, who is infinitely just, true, and powerful, “will bring thee”—not only *call* or *summon*, but will *force* thee—in *person*—no bail being admitted—to *appear in judgment*.— How will he do this? By want, sickness, pain, perhaps, at least death, by his angels, by the last trump, by his own arm.—“To *judgment*,” to be *tried, convicted, cast, condemned, executed*.— to give thee the wages of sin and impenitency.— *He, being dead, speaketh*, then, and exhorts, “Be brought now to judgment by conscience, and God’s word. and Spirit, and we will show thee a way to escape.—Leave off sin,—flee to Christ,—rejoice in him, ‘let thy heart cheer thee,’ through his salvation.”—He speaketh to busy worldlings. Shall your farm, your shop, your merchandise, your gains and losses, &c., engage and engross all your time, care, labour, pursuit, and death never occupy your thoughts?—To old people. He speaks to you, whose hoary heads and many infirmities show that your bodies are almost ready for the tomb. Is your soul then ready for God and heaven?—To relations, friends, acquaintances of the deceased, he speaks with a loud voice, and in a more peculiar manner. —

CCXXXI.

BELIEVERS DESIRE A HEAVENLY COUNTRY

HEBREWS xi. 16.

They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

SOME eminent writers have believed and endeavoured to prove, that the doctrine of a future state was not revealed to the people of God, under the Patriarchal or Mosaic dispensations, and that, in fact, they expected no such thing. Bishop Warburton, in particular, it is well known, laboured much to establish this opinion.* But, surely, this Sadducean notion is not to be reconciled with our text, nor with the contents of this chapter in general, which certainly proceeds on this supposition, that the ancient worthies performed and suffered the extraordinary things recorded of them, in expectation of future blessings. And of some of them this is especially affirmed: of Abraham, (ver. 10,) of Moses, (ver. 24—26,) of others, (ver. 35,) and of them all in general, (ver. 13.) Now, did the inspired author of this epistle learn these things concerning them purely by supernatural revelation? I incline to think not. It is much more probable that he collected them, partly at least, from what is recorded of them in the Old Testament. I am sure, however, he is supported in his assertions by various facts related, or declarations made, in the writings of Moses and the Prophets.—

* See his Divine Legation of Moses.

The translations of Enoch and Elijah were not concealed from the generations in which these holy men lived, and surely were strong proofs to them of a future state. The ancient patriarchs speak continually of human life as a pilgrimage, and the declaration of Jacob, when he blessed his sons and worshipped on the top of his staff, implied his hope of salvation in a future world. (Gen. xlix. 18.) God, who is "not the God of the dead," styling himself to Moses at the bush, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," long after these patriarchs were dead; the desire of Saul to see the spirit of Samuel, and Samuel actually appearing to him, according to the express testimony of the inspired historian; Job's confession; (ch. xix. 25;) David's expectation that he should behold God's "face in righteousness," (Ps. xvii. 15,) that his soul should not be "left in hades," but should be "shown the path of life," (Ps. xvi. 10, 11,) and that he should "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;" (Ps. xxiii 6;) that of Asaph; (Ps. lxxiii. 24;) Solomon's declaration: (Eccles. xii. 7:)—These instances, among many others, are demonstrations that the doctrine of a future life, in whatever way they knew it, whether by tradition from Adam, or by extraordinary revelations, was not unknown to holy men of old. For surely, as the Apostle speaks, "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country," (ver. 14,) *i.e.*, as it is said in the text, "*an heavenly.*"—These things were not peculiar to the saints of old; they are equally applicable to the true people of God in every age.

In further elucidation of them consider,

I. THE CHARACTER HERE GIVEN OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

"They desire a better country," &c.—The foundation of this their desire is their faith. They live and "walk by faith, and not by sight." (Heb. x. 38; 2 Cor. v. 7.) This faith has for its object God and his revealed will, the great truths of it, the record God has given of his Son, all the promises concerning grace and glory in him. — It is "the substance of things hoped for," &c. (ver. 1.) By this they are quickened and made alive from the dead, and are directed and governed in their whole walk and spiritual life, in the beginning, progress, and consummation of it. Thus Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham walked. (Ver. 4—10.) —

This, their faith, although partly exercised on the doctrines, declarations, precepts, and threatenings, is especially exercised on the promises. (Ver. 13.) These they "see," especially the promises of justification, sanctification, and eternal life: (Tit. i. 2:) they discern and esteem the promised blessings, earnestly desire to enjoy them, and confide in and "embrace," the promises that convey the blessings to us.—In proof of this, they "confess" and conduct themselves as "strangers and pilgrims," who have nothing, and shall not be long in the world; are in it on a business of great moment, are little known and little regarded while here; in a country not their own, through which, as pilgrims, they are passing, subject to many inconveniences and sufferings; among a people not their own, the soul dwelling in the body, as in a clay cottage, or moveable tent.—They seek "a better country, an heavenly." How? By acquainting themselves with it; that they may per-

ceive how well it deserves their pursuit; (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10;) by securing a title to it as “heirs, joint heirs with Christ;” (Rom. viii. 17;) a meetness for it in holiness; an earnest of it, through the in-dwelling Spirit; by aspiring after it, and *stretching themselves out*, (*οπισθονταί*,) 2 Cor. v. 2—8; Phil. i. 20, 21,) in earnest desire, lively expectation, and a diligent pursuit.—For the sake of it, like Moses, (ver 24—26,) they renounce all that would court their stay in this world, as riches, honours, pleasures, “counting all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus,” that they “may win Christ,” and obtain “the prize of their high calling.”—Nay, “for the joy that is set before them,” they “endure the cross, despising the shame,” like Jesus Christ. (Heb. xii. 2.) That they may attain that better country, that more enduring substance, none of the afflictions, reproaches, persecutions, &c., which lie in their way, “move them,” neither “count they their lives dear to themselves.” (Acts xx. 24.)—They are willing to pass through death itself, and already overcome the fear of it, through faith in Christ, and hope of an immortal life, to which they are begotten again. Consider, therefore,

II. THEIR GREAT PRIVILEGE.

“God is not ashamed to be called their God.”—God, an invisible being, a spirit, who in a peculiar sense resides in the invisible, spiritual, and eternal world, is ashamed, it appears, to be called the God of those who “walk by sight;” who regard only or chiefly visible and temporal things, and such things as they know by their outward senses.—God, who is great, and infinite in grace and goodness; the faithful God, who cannot lie,

who has given us “great and precious promises,” and in these promises holds out to our view and pursuit, blessings of infinite value and of everlasting duration, will not be the God of those who will not *see*, nor be *persuaded of*, nor *embrace* those promises.—God, who for a punishment of man’s disobedience and fall turned him out of paradise, and sent his posterity into the wilderness of this world, as into a place of exile, there to sojourn merely for a time, and pass through a state of probation, under a dispensation of grace and mercy, and then remove to a heavenly home, our Father’s house, “not made with hands;” he will not be the God of those who have so little love to or regard for their heavenly Father; their elder brethren, their native country, and Father’s house, &c., as to be content to remain always in this their state of banishment, and think, and speak, and act as if they were at home, in their own country and among their own people.—God, who by his gospel and the resurrection of his Son, “has brought life and immortality to light,” and has revealed an heavenly and most blessed state, and required us to set our affections upon it, is “ashamed to be called the God” of those, who so undervalue and despise this his infinite goodness and bounty, that they neither consider, nor desire, nor seek this heavenly country; neither making themselves acquainted with it, nor securing a title to nor acquiring a meetness for it.—God, who has shown us the vanity, uncertainty, and short duration of all earthly things, and the infinite superiority of the joys and glories of the heavenly country, will not be the God of those, who prefer earth to heaven, and refuse to forsake the trifling pleasures of this world, for the eternal enjoyments of that to

come.—That God, who has assured us that “through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom;” that we must “die” with Jesus, if we would “live” with him; (2 Tim. ii. 11;) and “if so be we suffer with him,” we shall also “be glorified together:” (Rom. viii. 17;)—that afflictions are the chastisements of our heavenly Father, (Heb. xii. 6—10,) trials of grace, purifying fires; (Zech. xiii. 9;) are but for a moment, and “work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:” (2 Cor. iv. 17:)—He will not be the God of those who decline this cross of Christ, and turn from his ways to avoid these light and momentary sufferings.—God, who has declared “death is yours” (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.) “to die is gain,” (Phil. i. 21,) though you “walk through the valley of the shadow of death” you “shall fear no evil,” &c., (Ps. xxiii. 4,) will not be the God of those who not only shrink back from death, but remain contentedly all their life time in “bondage through fear of it.” (Heb. ii. 15.)—But he will be the God of all such as answer the contrary character.

In what sense will he be their God? Not only will he stand related to them, in the character of a Creator Preserver, Benefactor, Redeemer, and Saviour: but he will deliver, protect, and govern them as their King; employ and reward them as their Master; love them and provide for them as their Father; counsel, and aid them as their Friend; give himself to them with all he is and has, as their Husband and Portion.—Nor does his relation to them as “their God,” cease at death: yet it must in the nature of things, if our whole persons then cease, for “he is not the God of the dead but the living.” But he termed himself at the bush, “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” long after their

bodies had died. Therefore the whole of them did not die; and even their bodies shall live again.—This leads me to observe,

III. WHAT GOD, AS THEIR GOD, HAS PREPARED FOR THEM. ;

“He hath prepared for them a city;”—A state of more permanent happiness than any which could be enjoyed in this mortal life. Had he not done this, he would, humanly speaking, be ashamed, or think it infinitely beneath him, to own the relation in which he stood to them. In other words, if he did nothing more for them than he does here on earth, it would be infinitely beneath his dignity to style himself ‘their God.’ For, to have the infinite and eternal Jehovah, the self-existent, independent, and supreme, the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God styling himself *our God*, imports every thing unspeakably great and excellent, and far beyond what any child of God doth or can receive in this transitory state; and at least implies our *immortality*. (Luke xx. 37.)—The heavenly state is often represented under the emblem of a city; (Heb. xii. 22; Rev. xxi. 2, 10;) a home, a place of rest, in opposition to this state of pilgrimage and journeying. Hence it is termed (πατρίδα, ver. 14,) a *native country*, a country in which our Father dwells, in opposition to this in which we are strangers and pilgrims:

“The house of our Father above,
The palace of angels and God ”

—A state of stability, in opposition to this unsettled, changeable, and transitory state. For though “we have here no continuing city, we seek one to come.” Hence it is termed “Mount Zion,” and (Rev. xxi. 10,) “a great

and high mountain, a city built on a rock." (Matt. xvi. 18.)

"Immoveably founded in grace,
She stands as she ever hath stood."

—A state of strength and safety. Even the church militant is a strong city; (Isai. xxvi. 1;) much more the church triumphant; in opposition to our present state of weakness and danger. (Rev. xxi. 12—14.)—A state of sublime enjoyment, whereby we reap the rewards of victory and danger; in opposition to our present state of labour and suffering. (Rev. xxi. 4—6; xxii. 1—4;) there is "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore." (Ps. xvi. 12.) What a change to such a one as St. Paul! 1 Cor. iv. 9—13; 2 Cor. iv. 8—12; xi. 24—33.)—A state of glory and honour, instead of this state of reproach and persecution. (Rev. xxi. 11, 18—20.)

"And brightly her Builder displays,
And flames with the glory of God."

—A state of society and intercourse with all the company of heaven, instead of solitude and desertion. Here the people of God are often "treated as the filth of the world;" they "wander in deserts and mountains, and dens and caves of the earth,"—there they join the "innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, God, the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect." (Heb. xii. 22, 23; Rev. xxi. 24.)—A state of order and just subordination, in opposition to anarchy and confusion; there are "thrones, dominions, principalities, powers." There, honour, authority, and power are founded on real excellence. The most good will be the most exalted.—A state of most near access to, and intercourse with, the great and eternal King and his blessed Son, (Rev.

xxi. 3, 22,) in opposition to this state of alienation and banishment: we shall be there admitted to the vision and enjoyment of God. (Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 4.)—How great the light and glory, the knowledge, purity, and happiness of that state! (Rev. xxi. 11, 23; xxii. 5.)—It is an eternal city, one that hath foundations, whose builder is God;" (Heb. xi. 10; Rev. xxi. 14;) this world has none. It passeth away, and soon no place will be found for it. (Rev. xx. 11.) — —

"O ye blest scenes of permanent delight,
Full above measure, lasting beyond bounds,
A perpetuity of bliss is bliss!" —

CCXXXII.

ESAU'S CONTEMPT OF HIS BIRTHRIGHT IMPROVED.

HEBREWS xii. 16.

*Lest there be any—profane person, as Esau, who for
one morsel of meat sold his birthright.*

How striking is that question of our Lord, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—But is it true that they, who lose their own souls, usually gain the whole world? or receive in exchange some very valuable and durable compensation? By no means. "They spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not." "They feed on wind," says Hosea; on what is empty and illusive, fleeting and transitory. "They feed on ashes," says Isaiah; on what, at best, is insipid and unprofitable, but in general is bitter and pernicious.

And they do this when they might receive living, refreshing, and healing water, sweet and nourishing milk, and cheering and strengthening wine; and that "without money and without price:" might "eat that which is good, and let their souls delight themselves in fatness." They "commit two great evils," are chargeable with two great follies, as well as two great crimes: they forsake Jehovah, his knowledge and love, his favour and friendship, his Spirit and grace, the fountain of living waters, and "hew out to themselves cisterns which can hold no water." They turn their backs on the unsearchable riches of Christ, and go in pursuit of glittering toys and shining trifles, yea of fetters and chains, poisons, diseases, and deaths. Or, as it is represented in my text, they thoughtlessly and profanely sell their birthright for a "mess of pottage," or "one morsel of meat."

The author of this epistle having in the preceding chapter, compassed his readers about with a "great cloud of witnesses" of the power and efficacy of faith, and having, in the beginning of this chapter, exhorted them, in imitation of these ancient worthies, to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which did so easily beset them;" and to "run with patience the race that was set before them;" and notwithstanding the various afflictions wherewith they were exercised, (which, he shows, were for their profit,) to persevere in their christian course, "lifting up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees; to make straight paths for their feet;" and to "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man can see the Lord:" (ver. 12—14:) and, inasmuch as no man can begin, much less go on in this christian course, without Divine grace:—he exhorts them to "look diligently, lest any one should fail

of the grace of God:" *i. e.*, stop short of, or fall from the grace of God; and lest "any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." This may mean,—any sinful lust, affection, or disposition rising in the heart, called a *root*, because concealed in the heart, producing evil fruit afterwards in the life.—An insincere or wicked person. (See Deut. xxix. 18.) *Gall*, a poisonous weed growing in the eastern countries, was often applied to infecting and destructive sins. (Amos vi. 12; Deut. xxxii. 32.) These occasion trouble and sorrow to the faithful, and an evil report is brought on the people and cause of God. Then, descending to particulars, he proceeds, "Lest there be any fornicator."—All sins of lewdness and uncleanness are here included. No sinners are more scandalous to the christian church than fornicators, if tolerated in it. The ancient heathens knew this, and therefore endeavoured, with the utmost malice and false accusation, to fix this charge on the first christians. Particular care should be taken lest any fall into this sin, and if any do, that they be put away from you.—Or any "profane person," one who despises or makes light of sacred and divine things,—as the name, day, or Word of God, his ways and people.—"As Esau," who, though the first-born of Isaac, circumcised, and partaking of the worship of that holy family, was yet "profane." See Gen. xxv. 30. Some accuse him of intemperance and gluttony, but there is no proof of this. His sin was his making light of the birthright, and the blessings annexed to it. The birthright generally included the being a priest in the family, (Exod. xix. 22,) a double portion of his father's property, (Deut. xxi. 17,) authority over his brethren, (Gen. xxvii. 29.) But in the family of Abraham, "the first-born,

as the root of the people of God, conveyed to his posterity all the blessings promised in the covenant: such as a right to possess the land of Canaan, and to be the father of Him, in whom all the nations were to be blessed, and to explain and confirm these promises to his children in his dying blessing to them.”* These great advantages did Esau profanely despise; and when afterwards “he would have inherited the” patriarchal “blessing,” of which he considered himself the presumptive heir, “he was rejected.” Having lived, it seems, forty or fifty years in careless unconcern respecting his imprudent conduct, he at length began to perceive how unwise a part he had acted, and sought to alter his father’s mind, but found no means of doing it, though “he sought it carefully with tears.” (Gen. xxvii. 38.) But when the blessing was irrevocably settled upon Jacob, he is represented as discovering great amazement, as though he had before little expected the event.—Consider we,

I. WHETHER THERE BE NOT A BIRTHRIGHT, WHICH WE MAY SELL; OR BLESSINGS, TO THE ENJOYMENT OF WHICH WE ARE BORN, BUT WHICH WE MAY FORFEIT.

If we compare our state with that of the inferior creatures, and consider ourselves first as human beings, we shall find we are born to privileges far beyond any they are capable of possessing. We are rational, and capable of that knowledge of God, of his nature and attributes, his works and ways, which they have no capacity of attaining; knowledge, which enlightens and enlarges, exalts and ennobles, refines and purifies, entertains and delights, nay, and even feasts the mind.

* See Macknight’s notes.

But this blessing we may sell.—We are capable of loving him, and being beloved by him, peculiarly and infinitely, which they are not. The felicity of fixing our esteem and love on adequate and worthy, nay, surpassing all conception worthy object, and of knowing ourselves to be noticed, regarded, and loved infinitely by a being infinitely great, perfect, and good! This also we may sell; make no more use of, than if we were not capable of it.—We are born capable of resembling him, of bearing his image and likeness, which no inferior creature is. (Gen. i. 26, 27.) The glory and happiness of this, of resembling the first and best of beings! This we may also sell, &c.—We are born capable of fellowship with him, a privilege for enjoying which the brutes have no capacity. An unspeakable honour, and continual source of happiness! But, alas! how many rest contented without it.—We enjoy the invisible visitation and guardian care of angels. (Ps. xci.; Heb. i.) This is an inestimable privilege, and not extended to the inferior creatures.—Immortality of soul and of body, when raised from the dead,—most blessed and glorious; a state of everlasting improvement in knowledge, holiness, and happiness. This belongs not to the beasts that perish. —

Compare our state with that of *fallen angels*; and consider us as sinners fallen, but redeemed by the life and death of the Son of God: in consequence of which we are born to enjoy blessings such as they are precluded from. (Heb. ii. 16.) We are all bought with blood, which they are not. (2 Cor. v. 14, 15; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Heb. iii. 9.) Our sins are atoned for: what is the greatness of this blessing? Hence,—Free justification is offered us, and not to angels. (Acts xiii. 38; Matt.

xi. 28.) Consider the immense mercy of this, that our sins should be as though they had not been.—Adoption. (John i. 12; Gal. iv. 4.) This is an inestimable blessing, and not offered to angels.—Regeneration and entire sanctification—Acquittance at the judgment-seat of Christ; escaping eternal death, and attaining eternal life, felicity, and glory.

Compare our condition with that of condemned spirits, and consider us as in a state of probation; that our birthright is to have life and death set before us, and a capacity of choosing life, &c. The rebukes and remonstrances of conscience, and the visitations, strivings, drawings, and operations of the Holy Ghost. We may be made his temples, and habitations of him continually.—Privileges these from which damned spirits are for ever excluded, and from which, if we reject or neglect them, we shall hereafter be excluded.

Compare our state with that of the heathen, and consider us, called christians, as born within the pale of the visible church; and we are born to the privilege of having the word and ordinances of God, and all the means of grace, in which the heathens have no share.

Compare the condition of such as are the children of religious parents, or whose lot is cast among the wise and pious, with that of those who are not so; and consider the privilege of a religious education, and of daily instructions, reproofs, &c., that such inherit, compared with the state of those who see continually before their eyes bad examples, and hear bad advice, &c.

Speak peculiarly to those who have obtained a spiritual birth, and are the children of God, and compare their state with that of the rest of mankind.—Entitled to the peculiar love, and care, and protection of God,

and a supply of all their wants here, temporal and spiritual, with an assurance that all things shall work for their good. This is not the case with others.—Heirs of an inheritance incorruptible hereafter, which others are not. Blessed with a lively hope of it, supporting and comforting them under all their trials, and taking away the fear of their last enemy, death. This is a blessing not possessed by the carnal part of mankind — Under the peculiar guidance of the providence, word, and Spirit of God, to the full and final enjoyment of that inheritance; the same Spirit assuring them of their title to it, fitting them for it, and giving them a foretaste of it.

And yet these various birthrights, and all the blessings included in them, may be sold.

II. FOR WHAT CONSIDERATION THEY WHO SELL THIS BIRTHRIGHT PART WITH IT.

“For one morsel of meat.”—For sin,—perhaps for one single besetting sin,—as drunkenness, uncleanness, injustice, defrauding, over-reaching, or dishonest gain. There may be in the carnal heart a desire for this, as in the body an appetite for food, and it may appear desirable, useful, and even necessary; but it is only “one morsel of meat,” its pleasure unsatisfying, and of short duration. The appetite returns as eager as before, and the vicious principle is nourished and increased, and becomes daily more unruly.

For the world.—“The desire of the flesh.” The gratifications of *sense*, the appetite and passion, in eating, drinking, and such like animal gratifications. This is parting with our birthright, which we have above the inferior creatures, viz., the dignity, glory, and

felicity of our rational and immortal nature, for the pleasures of brutes; nay, for pleasures which many of them enjoy in greater perfection than we.—“The desire of the eye;” pleasing the eye of the body or of the mind with laying up money, with dress, furniture, planting, building, &c., with things grand, new, and beautiful. This is also unsatisfying, and of short duration. It is parting with heaven for earth, eternity for time, the Creator for the creature. It is parting with an infinite good for what is not only at best finite, but is very small, if it be not rather an evil than a good; an eternal for a temporal one; a good belonging to, and necessary for, the soul, the better part of man, for one belonging to the body the worse part. In other words, it is selling our birthright for “one morsel of meat.”—“The pride of life;” the pomp, show, and glitter of the present world; glory, honour, preferment, the praise of men; the gratification of pride, self-will, discontent, impatience, anger, malice, envy, revenge. This is parting with the pleasures of the saint or angel, for (not the pleasures, for pleasures they have none,) but for the miseries of a devil. It is selling our birthright, not for one or many morsels of meat, but doses of poison; for what is sure to disorder, enfeeble, and destroy us.

Now all this proceeds from, and manifests **PROFANENESS**.

To be *profane*, taking the word actively, is, to make light of, and despise spiritual and divine things, which men do because of their ignorance of them; their unbelief; their insensibility, and hardness of heart; (Rom. ii. 4, 5;) their carnal, earthly, and devilish mind—To be *profane*, taken passively, implies a person or place

separated, or cast out from the society of things sacred. So holy things are said to be profaned when the veneration due to them is taken off, and they are exposed to common use and contempt. Thus those who reject, neglect, or treat with contempt their spiritual privileges and blessings, are already, like things common or unclean, cast out from the society of things and persons sacred and holy.—Continuing to be so, they shall be everlasting outcasts from God, and shall find “no place for repentance, though they seek it with tears.” (Matt. vii. 22, 23; xxv. 11; Luke xiii. 25—28.) * * *

CCXXXIII.

HE THAT SPEAKETH FROM HEAVEN NOT TO BE REFUSED.

HEBREWS xii. 25.

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh in heaven.

PERHAPS no epistle in the New Testament contains matter more adapted to the present times than this, or more powerful antidotes against the evils now most prevalent amongst professing christians. What are those evils? Are they not the rejection of the Gospel on the one hand; or the neglect thereof, and of its glorious salvation on the other? Are they not a departure from “the faith once delivered to the saints,” at least in some of its most capital branches, such as those which respect the person and priesthood of Christ; or a decay of that

true and vital religion which was evidently enjoyed in the hearts, and displayed in the lives of the first christians? And are we not most solemnly and strongly cautioned against all these evils in this epistle, and shown, in the clearest and most convincing manner, what will be the consequence of our falling into them? Surely if, after we have read and considered the contents of this epistle, we be still entangled and involved in these sins, our blood will be on our own heads, and we shall be inexcusable.—Now all these evils may very properly be considered as arising from, or comprehended in one; and that is the evil against which we are warned in the words of my text. It is the “refusing,” or the “disregarding, him that speaketh.” If we be preserved from this, we shall be from the other evils. We shall neither reject nor neglect the gospel salvation; shall neither depart from the truth, nor backslide from the grace revealed and held forth in it; shall neither be infidels, nor apostates, nor backsliders, nor lukewarm professors, if we take care not to “refuse him that speaketh.”—Here, therefore, we have a most important caution, and to it I now earnestly solicit your diligent attention.—Inquire we,

I. WHO IT IS “THAT SPEAKETH,” AND WHAT ARE THE REASONS WHY WE OUGHT TO SEE THAT WE DO NOT REFUSE HIM?

Some may think the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is meant, who at sundry times spoke from heaven; as at the giving of the Law from Sinai, so at the introduction of the Gospel by his Son; to him he bore testimony three times with an audible voice from heaven, as at his baptism, at his transfiguration, and a

title before his passion; add to this, the Father, whose every wisdom and word he was, and who dwelt in him, and all his fulness, spoke continually in and by him. (John xiv. 10.) Nevertheless, although this gives a very noble and important sense to the passage, I do not conceive it to be that of the Apostle; but that Christ in his own person, as God and man, is here meant, and that He, coming and speaking as “the Lord from heaven,” in giving the Gospel, is here opposed to Moses, who was of the earth, and spake only on earth in giving the Law. The context, I think, makes this plain. See ver. 18—25; and com. ch. ii. 3.)

The chief *reasons* why we ought not to refuse to hear him, are,—The extraordinary nature of his mission and commission; much more extraordinary than those of Moses, or of any other messenger of God. Christ and his Gospel were foretold from age to age, and exactly delineated; not so Moses and his Law. To send Christ, God made a new thing on the earth, a virgin to conceive; Moses was born as other men. The birth of Christ was announced by angels and signs from heaven; not so, that of the Jewish Legislator. Moses and his Law were only preparatory to Christ and his Gospel. No other ever was so commissioned. (Isai. liii. 1, 5, 6.)—The dignity of his person. He was not like Moses, a servant, but a Son; (ch. iii. 5, 6;) not a mere creature, but the Creator; (ch. i. 10;) not a man merely, but God and man; (ch. ii. 3;) “Emmanuel.” See Mark xii. 6.—A third reason is, the superior excellence of his dispensation; one of greater light, (Luke i. 78,) greater grace, (John i. 16, 17; 2 Cor. iii. 6—10,) greater mildness; (see context;) greater plainness and clearness, not veiled with types, or obscured by shadows;

2 Cor. iii. 12;) more durable; (2 Cor. iii. 11;) a dispensation, therefore, worthy of "more earnest heed." (ch. ii. 1.)—The wisdom and importance of his doctrine. Not only was it true, and certain, he being Truth incarnate, but wise, for in him were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and he was "the wisdom of God;" (1 Cor. i. 24:) wise as to the matter, manner, seasonableness, and measure of all he uttered. Well might the people be "astonished at his doctrine," and inquire, "whence hath this man this wisdom?" and acknowledge that "he spake as never man spake."—A fifth reason is found in the extraordinary and wonderful manner in which God bore witness to him and sanctioned his doctrine, (ch. ii. 4, &c.,) in the prodigies which attended his death and resurrection, the circumstances of his ascension, and the effusion of his Holy Spirit; the judgments from time to time executed on such as rejected or opposed his doctrine, as on Herod, Elymas, the Jews, the Romans.—The unlimited authority which the Father hath given him over all nations, kings, kingdoms, men, angels; (Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. ii. 10, 11; Eph. i. 20—23;) and the right to execute judgment. (Rev. i. 13—18.)—His boundless power; (John v. 21; xi. 25; Phil. iii. 21;) being "able to save to the uttermost," and to destroy.—His unparalleled love to us, manifested in his incarnation life, sufferings, death. &c. Can we refuse to hear and obey one, that has given such wonderful proofs of love, and who in speaking, as well as in doing and suffering, can have no end in view but our good?—If all these reasons can be despised or slighted, let me remind you of another,—The justice and wrath of the Lamb. (Rom. xiv. 11; Rev. i. 7; Matt. xxv. 32; 2 Thess. i. 7, 8;

Rev. xix. 15; xiv. 10; ii. 12.) Not only is his word “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,” (Heb. iv. 12,) but his justice and wrath are dreadful beyond expression. — —

II IN WHAT SENSE HE SPEAKS, AND IN WHAT RESPECTS MEN ARE WONT TO REFUSE HIM.

He speaks—By his providence, his kingdom being over all, and all nations and individuals being entirely in his hands, and at his disposal. He setteth up one and putteth down another. Sometimes (as now,) he speaks by terrible wars, whereby he shakes the heaven and earth. And if we do not attend to and hear these judgments, and turn to him in repentance, we really “refuse him that speaketh.”—By the true light that enlighteneth every man,” by reason, conscience, his Spirit’s internal motions. (Rev. 18—20.) And if we do not hear his voice, but “grieve,” “quench,” and “do despite” to this Holy Spirit, we again refuse him.—He especially speaks by his word: as a Teacher, when he informs us that we “are of our father the devil, if we do his works;” that “if we die in our sins, where he is, we cannot come;” that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and that we must, therefore, “be converted,” and “born again;” that “a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit;” that “the tree must be made good, that the fruit may be good.” Now, unless we believe his words, and learn of him as our Teacher; unless we hear, read, meditate, and have it at heart to understand, to experience, and practise his word, again we refuse.—He speaks as a Mediator and Saviour, and says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me;” “the Son of man came not

to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" "come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," &c.; "if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" "whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Now, if we do not apply to him, and confide in him as our Mediator, for reconciliation and salvation, we still "refuse him that speaketh."—He speaks as a Shepherd and Bishop of souls, and says, "what man having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it," &c. (Luke xv. 4—7.) "even so the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost;" "how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not;" "I am the door" of the sheep, "by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and shall go in and out, and find pasture;" "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep;" "I am come, that my sheep might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly;" "my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand;" "fear not, little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Now, if we do not return to him, enter in by this door into the sheep-fold, and remain under the care of the good Shepherd, we "refuse him that speaketh."—He speaks to us as a Lawgiver and King, and says, "The kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the Gospel;" for I am "exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins;" the "kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by

force;" "strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" "when once the master of the house hath shut to the door, and ye begin to knock, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, and he shall answer, I know you not, whence ye are," &c.; (Luke xiii. 24—28;) "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven;" "think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil;" "whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven;" "for I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven;" "ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill, &c.; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment," &c. (Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 43—45, 48.) Now we refuse him that speaketh, if we do not attend to him, consider, obey, &c. these laws of his kingdom; if we do not put ourselves under his protection, and yield a cordial and constant obedience to all his laws.—He speaks as a Judge, and says, "The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day," &c.; Acts xvii. 30, 31; "then shall the King say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father," &c. Matt. xxv. 34, 41;) "behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man as his work shall be;" "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to

every soul of man that doeth evil;" "but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good;" "let your loins be always girded, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." Now, if looking for such things, we do not give diligence to be "found of him in peace," (2 Pet. iii. 14,) and prepare to meet him as our Judge. we must be considered as "refusing him that speaketh." — —

III. THE CAUSES WHY MEN REFUSE HIM.

These are—Infidelity, whether Atheism, Deism, or Socinianism, viz., disbelieving, or calling in question the truth of the Gospel in general, or any particular truth thereof, in particular: the seeds of this unbelief are sown in our hearts through the corruption of nature, the subtlety of Satan, conversation with the world, the perusal of noxious books, &c.—Hardness, and an impenitent heart, (Rom. ii. 4, 5;) this is natural to us, and encouraged by almost every thing around us, persons and things.—Self-righteousness: we are also prone to this, especially if our character has been moral, and we have been possessed of the form of godliness, (Phil. iii. 4; Rom. ix. 31—33; x. 2—4.)—Love of the world, and anxious cares; riches, honour, pleasure, business, company, amusement; these choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.—Fear of man, and of reproach or persecution, or worldly trials or troubles, or through shame.—Formality in the means of grace, not being guarded against, but encouraged and rested in.—Luke-warmness and sloth encouraged.—Want of consideration, and laying to heart the truth which we know.—Leaning to our own understanding, and trusting in our own abilities and efforts, instead of looking to God

in sincere and fervent prayer for divine teaching and aid.—Deferring to a future time what we know to be our present duty.—Let us now,

IV APPLY THE WHOLE, AND SHOW THE GREAT EVIL AND MISERABLE CONSEQUENCES OF “REFUSING HIM THAT SPEAKETH.”

By way of examination:—Do you refuse him that speaketh? Do you hear, and duly regard, the voice of his Providence? of his Spirit, of conscience, of reason? of his Word? Do you not refuse, but believe in him and learn of him as a Teacher; worship the Father through him as a Mediator; follow him as a Shepherd, submit to him and obey him as your King and Lawgiver, expect and prepare for him as your Judge.—Consider the great evil and miserable consequences of “refusing him.” It is infinitely unreasonable; extremely ungrateful; it implies gross disobedience to the Father, and to the Son himself; it is absolute rebellion against him; it exposes to certain condemnation and wrath. (Deut. xviii. 15; Acts iii. 22; Heb. ii. 1—4; x. 26; xii. 26—29.) —I let me then exhort you; “See that ye refuse not,” &c.; take heed, lest infidelity, or impenitence, or self-righteousness, or love of the world, or fear of man, or reproach, or formality, or lukewarmness, or want of consideration, or trust in your own understanding, and neglect of prayer, or delay, betray you into this sin and the danger and ruin which must ensue. —

CCXXXIV.

ON THE ACCEPTABLE SERVICE OF GOD.

HEBREWS xii. 28.

We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

THE Apostle having stated, in the foregoing verses, the pre-eminent privileges and prospects to which true believers in Christ are admitted, and having shown, by a reference to the prophecy of Haggai, (ch. ii. 6,) the stability and permanence of the New Testament dispensation, which is to remain to the end of time as the only form of Divine worship and religion acceptable to God, from which alone men can obtain a certain and bright prospect of everlasting glory, he adds the words of the text, as a practical inference from his argument. See ver. 18—27 — — Consider,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN SERVING GOD, AND WHEN IT MAY BE SAID WE SERVE HIM ACCEPTABLY.

To serve God is to worship him. (Matt. iv. 10; Luke iv. 8; 1 Sam. vii. 3.) See particularly Heb. ix. 1, where ordinances of Divine worship are termed “ordinances of Divine service;” and ver. 9, where worshipping God is termed “doing service;” and Acts xxvi. 7, where the twelve tribes, worshipping God statedly, are said to “serve him night and day.” But what is it to worship God? It is to do him homage *outwardly*, by attending his appointed ordinances, public and domestic; *inwardly*, acknowledging, and being sensible of

our dependence on him for life, and breath, and all things, temporal and spiritual: of our obligations to him as our Creator, Preserver, &c.; for all we are, (our members, senses, faculties;) for all we have; (time, talents, blessings;) for all we hope for, in this world or the next: of his absolute power and authority over us, as our Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge.—It is to venerate his matchless glories; to adore and praise him with seriousness and solemnity, awe, and self-abasement, with joy and delight.—It is to feel in ourselves, and manifest to others, affections and dispositions suited to his Divine attributes, and the blessed relations in which he stands to us. [Explain this, and show that this alone is worshipping in spirit, and therefore in truth. (John iv. 23, 24; Phil. iii. 3.)]—In prayer, it is to ask only for what we really need, and what his word authorizes us to ask, and to do so with sincerity, fervency, and perseverance, and in faith.—It is to give thanks with gratitude of heart:—to hear, read, and meditate on his word with sincere desire, concern, and resolution, through God's help:—to understand, believe, and experience the efficacy of it, and to practise what we hear:—to receive the Lord's supper with faith and devotion, so as to “feed on Christ in our hearts with thanksgiving.”—This, and only this, is to worship acceptably. —

It is to be subject and obedient to him, as a servant to a master. (Rom. vi. 16; xii. 1.)—We must yield ourselves to him. (Rom. vi. 19,) intelligently, willingly, entirely, and irrevocably, to be his subjects, servants, sons, and daughters, to which relations we are invited. This implies, that we no longer yield ourselves to the world, the flesh, sin, Satan, but to the Lord, with de-

sire that he would, and in confidence that he does, accept us through his Son. Hereby we are joined to the Lord to serve him. (Isai. lvi. 6.) As his servants, we must give evidence of our subjection and obedience to his will in all things universally; (Ps. cxix. 6;) constantly. (1 Cor. x. 30.)—In *holiness* (Luke i. 74,) towards God; dying to, and delivered from the power of sin, (Rom. vi. 18,) the world, (Gal. vi. 14,) our own wisdom, will, and carnal inclinations. (Gal. ii. 20.) This implies, to be dedicated to God, employed for him, conformed to him.—In righteousness towards our neighbour, including truth, justice, mercy, charity, and its fruits. — —

It is to serve his cause; that which he is carrying on in the world: advancing his glory, and the present and everlasting good of mankind, by promoting the progress of his Gospel, or of his truth and grace among men. (John xii. 26.) — —

As to the properties of this service.—It must be in sincerity and truth; (Josh. xxiv. 14;) termed by David, “a perfect heart.” (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.)—With reverence and godly fear, (text,) from a sense of his presence, (Luke i. 75, *before him*,) his glory, wisdom, power, eternity, immensity, supremacy. To which should be added, a watchful fear of our enemies, (Prov. xxviii. 14,) and a jealous fear of ourselves. (Heb. iv. 1.)—In confidence, or without a slavish fear; (Luke i. 74;) Rom. viii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 7;) and a confidence arising from the mediation of Christ, justification through him, (Rom. v. 1,) and the testimony of our conscience. (1 John iii. 21.)—In humility of mind, (Acts xx. 19; Mic. vi. 8,) arising from a deep sense of the distance between him and us, and a consciousness that we are

unworthy to be permitted to serve him, and that our best services are unworthy of his acceptance.—In resignation under all his dispensations, persuaded that his providence is over all; that all his dispensations are wise, just, and gracious; that his eye is upon each of his servants; that he puts each of them in his proper place, and will make all things work for their good.—In meekness, gentleness, &c., towards all men, even enemies.—All our services are to flow chiefly from love as their *principle*, to be guided by the Divine will as their *rule*, and directed to the glory of God as their *end*. (1 Cor. x. 31.) Thus they will be performed with a “willing mind,” (1 Chron. xxviii. 9; John xiv. 15; Matt. vi. 24,) and the service of God will be perfect freedom. — —

II. THE REASONABLENESS AND IMPORTANCE OF THUS SERVING HIM.

Every part of this service is reasonable; (Rom xii. 1,) being different from the unreasonable services of the heathen in the worship of their gods, their bloody, lewd, ridiculous, unmeaning rites; the expensive, burdensome, shadowy, and hardly intelligible sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jews.—The christian’s service of faith, love, and obedience, is highly reasonable. For faith has for its object, not lies, but truth; love has beauty, excellence, goodness; and obedience commands, which are wise, holy, good. Few ceremonies are enjoined, and those most significant, as the sabbath, baptism, and the Lord’s supper. Thus it far exceeds the service of the tabernacle and temple, though of Divine institution. — —

It is reasonable we should perform this service.—In

justice: for we are God's by right of creation, preservation, and redemption.—In gratitude; for his numberless and great benefits.—Its infinite importance appears in that it is *our indispensable duty*, in justice and gratitude: *our great interest*, in time and eternity.

III. HOW WE MAY BE ENABLED TO SERVE THE LORD AS ABOVE DESCRIBED.

We must “have grace.”—*Enlightening* grace. In order to our serving God, we must “know” him (1 Chron. xxviii. 9,) must be acquainted with him; must know ourselves, or we shall not be humble, resigned, meek, as we ought to be; must know the Mediator, through whom alone we can come to God; must know God's will, or we cannot do it; and must know the truths of the Gospel in general, which have a connexion with, and influence on our serving God.—*Quickening* grace; awakening the mind to a sense of the certainty and importance of spiritual and eternal things; convincing, humbling, begetting repentance unto life, a living faith, union with Christ, a spiritual mind.—*Pardoning* grace. See Heb. ix. 15. Without this we cannot serve God with confidence, hope, love, joy, peace, &c.—*Renewing* grace; for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nor an impure fountain send forth clear streams. The heart must be changed, that the life may be changed: and we must be “created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” if we would walk in them. (Eph. ii. 10.)—*Strengthening* grace; inspiring fortitude, resolution, constancy, and power to resist the devil, overcome the world, crucify the flesh, conquer the power of sin, and the fear of death; and enabling

us to do, and persevere in doing, the whole will of God. — — *Comforting* grace; supporting us in the midst of reproaches, injuries, losses, afflictions, the death of relatives and friends, and the various trials and troubles which we shall certainly meet with, chiefly by immortal hopes, and an earnest of heaven in our hearts. — —

CCXXXV

SEEKING A CITY TO COME.

HEBREWS xiii. 14.

We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

-THERE is, perhaps, no subject that can come under our consideration, which is more important, more interesting, or even more profitable to us, than that contained in these words. It is a subject that concerns us all, and that infinitely. It is reasonable, therefore, that we should be called to reflect deeply upon it, and it is most certain, if we do so aright, we shall not do it in vain. It is a sure and safe way to true wisdom. Of this Moses, one of the wisest and best of men, hath assured us, both in that most admirable composition of his, termed his song, and also in the ninetieth Psalm, of which, it is well known, he was the author. “O that they were wise,” says he in the former, “that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end:” implying, that this is the way to true wisdom, to consider that “we have here no continuing city,” &c. “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,” are his words in the 90th Psalm. Only let us estimate our days as we should,

and attend to the flight of time, and we shall become truly wise.—In this way we shall learn “to fear the Lord,” which is “the beginning of wisdom,” and to hate and shun sin, which would expose us to his displeasure. Thus we shall be led to prefer his favour and image to all other enjoyments and pursuits. We shall moderate our desires after earthly things, and shall “set our affections on things” more worthy of them, because more solid, certain, and durable. We shall pass through the trials of life with greater fortitude, and bear the troubles of it with more resignation, patience, and contentment, considering their end which is fast approaching, and the exceeding great reward which awaits the persevering christian. We shall also be more diligent in the pursuit of every thing excellent and praiseworthy. In particular, we shall be more inclined, and better enabled to deny ourselves and take up our daily cross, and be willing, when called, to suffer reproach and persecution for Christ’s sake, that we may reign with him in glory.—This the Apostle intimates in the verses immediately preceding our text. (See ver. 11—13)—Consider we,

I. THE FLEETING AND TRANSITORY NATURE OF EVERY THING HERE.

“We have here no continuing city.” Our lives do not continue. Were we to live as long as the antediluvians, nearly a thousand years, yet a thousand years are soon passed over.—If we contemplate a thousand years in prospect, they seem a long time, but if we view them as expired, they appear in a more just light. (Ps. xc. 4.) — —

"Time in advance, behind him hides his wings,
And seems to creep decrepit with his age;
Behold him when past by, what then is seen,
But his broad pinions swifter than the wind?
And all mankind cry out on his career."

But alas! our days are generally limited to three-score and ten, (Ps. xc. 10,) nay, frequently, to a much shorter space.—We may well use the words of Job, (ch. xiv. 1, 2.) or of David, (Psal. xxxix. 5; 1 Chron. xxix. 15.) Yet, how prone we are to forget this! — Now let it be remembered, that when life ends, all its interests, and honours, and wealth, and pleasures, also terminate here below.*—These, indeed, in many instances, cease much before death. For our health is frequently lost long before our life, and then we cannot enjoy them. Infirmary of body or mind, affliction or pain, often embitter our earthly possessions and pleasures, and render us incapable of receiving any gratification from outward objects.—Supposing life, health, and strength, and the perfect use of our members, senses, and faculties, to continue, how often do riches and other temporal advantages "take to themselves wings and fly away!" how uncertain and transitory are human honours!—Nor is it any wonder, that the acquirements of individuals pass away, when even public works, the works of kings and kingdoms, do not continue; forts, towers, castles, pyramids, cities, architecture, sculpture, painting;—nay, the works of nature; rocks, mountains, rivers, seas, and islands: (Job.

* "Linguenda tellus, et domus, et placens
Uxor: neque harum, quas colis, arborum
Te, præter invisas cupressos,
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur."—Hor. Carm. Lib. ii. 14.

xiv. 11, 18, 19:)—the earth itself, and these visible heavens. (Isai. li. 6; Matt. xxiv. 29; Rev. xx. 11, 12; 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12.) —

“The fatal period, the great hour, is come,
And nature shrinks at her approaching doom;
Loud peals of thunder give the sign, and all
His terrors in array surround the ball:
Sharp lightnings with their meteor blaze conspire,
And darting downward, set the world on fire.”

II. THE SOLIDITY AND PERMANENCE OF THE LIFE TO COME; OR THE NATURE AND DURATION OF FUTURE HAPPINESS.

“We seek one to come;” a city “which hath foundations,” &c., (Heb. xi. 10,) planned by infinite wisdom, executed by infinite power, designed by infinite love, for the habitation of the righteous. The city is described ch. xii. 22, 23; Rev. xxi. 1—5, 10, 23; xxii. 1, 3—5.—This state implies the perfection of our souls in all their faculties. Hence perfect knowledge of God and of his works, which will be laid open to our inspection; (1 Cor. xiii. 9—12;) holiness, and even happiness in proportion. (1 John iii. 1, 2; Ps. xvi. 11.)—No hinderance will arise from the body, which will be made healthy, vigorous, active, powerful, spiritual, incorruptible, immortal. Its senses, its members will be all perfect, and adorned with a high degree of beauty, dignity, lustre, and glory. Well might the Apostle say, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” (Rom. viii. 18.)—As to our habitation:—It will be “the new heaven and new earth;” an incorruptible, spiritual, and eternal world! There will

be no temptation, no sin, and, therefore, no sorrow! It will contain no evil, no curse; every possible good in perfection, and for ever! Happy, even if solitary!—But we shall have the society of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, confessors, martyrs, saints; the greatest, wisest, and best of mankind; the angels; Christ Jesus, the head of this most glorious and happy society. —In and through him, we shall enjoy the vision, love, and fellowship of the eternal Father, who in his infinite being and perfections will be all our own. —

This city is yet “to come.” It is *invisible*, and, therefore, the object of faith, and not of sight: (2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 7; 1 John iii. 2; Col. iii. 3;) the ground of which faith is the word of God revealing it. It is *future*, and, therefore, the object of hope, and not of enjoyment; (Rom. viii. 17—24;) the ground of which hope is the relations in which God stands to us, and the infinity of his wisdom, power, and love: What may not creatures expect from such a Creator, children from such a Father, a spouse from such a Husband. (See Heb. xi. 16.)—We are assured of it from the proof God hath already given of his love and goodness. “To man the bleeding cross hath promised all.”—His inviolable faithfulness: he hath promised, and confirmed his promise by an oath. (Heb. vi. 17, 18.)—The pledges and earnest he hath given of the accomplishment of his promise, particularly by the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the effusion of the Holy Spirit; the former to prepare the city for us, the latter to prepare us for the city. —Hence, as our brother, husband, our head and representative, he has already taken possession of the inheritance for us; is already in the city and upon the throne, and has “all power,” and “the keys of death and of

hell," and will "come again and receive us unto himself," our souls at death, and our bodies afterwards. What a foundation for hope! Well may we hold it fast without wavering! (Heb. x. 19.) Well might the Apostle call it an "anchor of the soul!" (Heb. vi. 20.) —

III. HOW WE SHOULD SEEK THIS HAPPINESS SO AS TO FIND IT.

Persuaded "we have here no continuing city," we must conduct ourselves as "strangers and pilgrims." (Heb. xi. 13—16.) The Patriarchs confessed this in word, (Gen. xxiii. 4; xlvii. 9; Ps. xxxix. 12; cxix. 19, 54,) and manifested it in deed, purchasing only burying places, not houses or estates, and "dwelling in tents." (Gen. xxiii. 3; xlix. 29—32.) We, like them, must be dead to this world, and spiritually minded. (Col. iii. 3.)—We must believe there is another and better country. (2 Cor. iv. 13, 17.) We must desire it and seek it, (*ορεγοῦνται*,) with sincere, earnest, constant, increasing desire and labour. (Phil. iii. 12—14; 1 Cor. ix. 24—27.—By repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we must get ourselves enrolled citizens of this city; being justified and made the children of God.—We must put on the garments of salvation, and robes of righteousness, that, being dressed like its inhabitants, we may be prepared to appear among them. (2 Cor. v. 3.)—We must learn the language of the country, which is the language of wisdom, praise and love.—We must be acquainted with, and observant of the institutions and customs of this city, and must habituate ourselves to obey the laws of the Son of God, the chief magistrate, the prince and king of the city. (Rev. xxii. 14.)—We must walk in the way

that leads to it, the way of universal holiness and righteousness; (Jer. vi. 16; 1. 5; Heb. xii. 14;) and in the way of the cross, suffering with him that we may reign together: (Heb. xiii. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 12:) this is the strait, but royal way, to the heavenly Zion, or city of God.—As we advance and make progress, we may expect to be favoured with some glimpses of its glory, and shall have that intercourse with God, and the inhabitants of this city, which will be an earnest of our being admitted to dwell in it for ever. —

INFERENCES.

How inconsistent the conduct of those who know and acknowledge that they have “here no continuing city,” and yet set their affections on present things, and are as full of care about them, and as eager in pursuit of them, as if they were sure the world was their only portion, and that they were to stay in it for ever!—How pitiable and miserable the condition of those, who, having “here no continuing city,” have not secured, and are not seeking to secure a title to one to come!—How happy the condition of those, who, as they have “here no continuing city,” have secured a title to one to come! especially since that to come is so much preferable to any here. (2 Cor. v. 1.)—What a mercy that we, who are so guilty as to have forfeited all right and title, even to an abode here, may nevertheless attain one so superior! And how much we owe to the goodness and love of God in Christ on this account! That the gates of the city stand open day and night!—As life and every thing here is of such short continuance and so uncertain, and since if we do not insure a title to this building of God while we live, we cannot afterwards,

how necessary it is not to delay, but now to “strive to enter in at the strait gate,” lest it be shut against us, (Luke xiii. 25,) and like the foolish virgins we be excluded!—How little are the enjoyments of this short and uncertain life to be regarded! (1 Cor. vii. 29—31.) —How little are its sufferings to be dreaded! (Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 16—18.) — —

CCXXXVI.

THE WAY TO HEAR THE WORD WITH PROFIT.

JAMES i. 21.

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

THESE words are an inference drawn from the preceding verses, especially ver. 18, where the people of God are said to be “begotten by the word of truth;” even the Gospel of salvation. This word, however, has not the same effect upon all, because they are not prepared to hear it, do not hear it in a right manner, nor to a right end.—I shall, therefore, endeavour to show,

I. THE PREPARATION NECESSARY TO HEARING.

In order to hearing the word with profit, we must “lay apart” (*αποθεμενοι*,) *put off*, as a worn out, ragged, and dirty garment, (Eph. iv. 22; Col. iii. 8,) “all filthiness;” (*πασαν ρυπαριαν*;) the word is frequently put for the filthiness of ulcers, and of every kind: “and superfluity of naughtiness;” (*περισσειαν κακίας*;) all sin is su-

perfluous, and there is abundance of it; the Apostle may mean, therefore, sin in general, and malice in particular. The last clause may be rendered the *overflowing of malice*, such as scoffings, railings, and evil speakings. The whole passage implies, that all sin must be laid aside as being filthy and superfluous, and as preventing our receiving profit by the word. (Jer. iv. 3.) We must lay aside all sin; particularly pride, discontent, anger, malice, envy, covetousness, lust, inordinate affection, which indispose for hearing; all that is sinful in word, lying, slandering, evil-speaking, tale-bearing, trifling conversation; all that is sinful in action, injustice, unmercifulness, gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness.—These sins are “filthy.” they defile the soul as with filthy ulcers, and render it abominable before a holy God.—There is no reason or excuse for them; they are superfluous; unnecessary, answer no good end, neither to *God*, whom they dishonour; our *neighbour*, whom they harm often in his body, always in his soul; nor *ourselves*, whom they render uneasy and miserable, here and hereafter; they are not profitable, even to the devil, who, by prevailing with us to sin, is only ‘heaping up wrath against the day of wrath.’—They prevent the good effect of the word. The soul enslaved to them is not disposed or enabled either to attend, consider, understand, believe, be affected by, or obey the word. The mind is blinded by these sins, and does not apprehend the truth brought before it; the heart is hardened by them, and does not feel, and is not affected by it; the conscience is either *seared*, and then is not convinced and alarmed, or it is *defiled* with guilt, and then it dreads and hates the truth. (1 Kings xviii. 17; xxi. 20.) The Spirit of God is grieved, and without his influences the word cannot profit us. —

II. THE RIGHT WAY OF HEARING.

“Receive with meekness the engrafted word.” “Receive:” the understanding must attend to it, perceive, assent, be convinced, (Heb. iv. 2,) be taken up with the truth and importance of the word. and hence be enlightened; (Luke ix. 44;) the conscience must be awakened, alarmed, pacified; the will and affections must submit to it, choose, embrace it: (2 Thess. ii. 10,—“With meekness,” (Isai. lxi. 1.) This is opposed to wrath, whereby men rise up in displeasure at the word: (Jer. vi. 10; to stubbornness, when we are resolved either not to be convinced, or, if convinced, not to yield; (Jer. ii. 25; xlv. 16, 17;) to a contentious cavilling spirit. (Ps. xxv. 8. 9.) It implies, humility and brokenness of heart, (Isai. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2; teachableness, (Lam. ii. 17; Acts x. 33.) It is opposed to “rejecting the counsel of God.” (Luke vii. 30; Acts xiii. 46.)—Thus the word is engrafted. (Jer. xxxi. 33; 1 John iii. 9.) Its truths, commands, promises, &c. are received into the soul by faith, and have a prevailing influence and control over us.—The graft changeth the nature of the tree; draweth all the sap of the stock to itself, &c. Such is the effect of the word, when received in faith, and accompanied with the influence of God’s Spirit to the heart. It will draw all the thoughts, affections, cares of the soul to itself, and impress them to the service of God. — —

III. THE END WE SHOULD HAVE IN VIEW IN HEARING THE WORD.

Not to pass away a leisure hour—not to satisfy a vain curiosity—not even to increase our knowledge.—But

to save our souls: to be enlightened, justified, sanctified, glorified; to be made partakers of wisdom, holiness, happiness. This the Gospel will effect, if received aright. (Rom. i. 16.) — —

CCXXXVII.

DOING THE WORD, OR PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION ENFORCED.

JAMES i. 22—27.

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

To all who believe in the being and attributes of God, his superintending providence over mankind, and a future state of rewards and punishments, religion must appear to be the most important thing in the world. It must especially appear in this light to those who believe in divine revelation, and credit the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. By such, religion

must be considered as closely connected even with the well-being of society, and necessary to the happiness of mankind, in the present life. And much more must they regard it as being essential to their happiness in another and future state of existence; and acknowledge, that without religion, even true, or, as it is here termed, "pure and undefiled religion," they can have no ground for expecting felicity after death: whereas with it they have a certain prospect thereof, and that through eternal ages. And yet important as religion is, there is hardly any thing, perhaps, concerning which mankind in general are either so careless on the one hand, or so ignorant and mistaken on the other. Many give evident and daily proof that, under a profession of christianity, they live in the almost total neglect of it, and prefer the most contemptible amusements, and insignificant trifles, to the study and practice of it. While others give equal evidence that they are either ignorant what it is, and mistake its whole nature, or, at least, that they rest in a mere speculative profession, and are destitute of any genuine experience of its salutary influence and power. For it is too notorious a fact to be concealed, my brethren, that as very many in this country, although they have been baptised, make no serious profession of religion at all, and therefore seldom or never hear or read the word of God; so many take up a barren profession, a profession that produces no real fruit, and are "hearers only." Such persons would do well to look into the epistle of St. James. They could hardly open in any part of it, which would not set their error before them in so striking a point of view, as we might hope would make them ashamed of their conduct, and convince them of the unreasonable-

ness of professing the religion of Christ, a religion that is almost wholly experimental and practical, without either the experience or practice of it. Do not misunderstand me: I do not deny but christianity has its doctrines. Certainly it has, and these are of deep importance, and make an essential part of it. Yet they are one and all revealed, in order to experience and practice. They are not revealed or taught us, for their own sake; but, as a foundation is laid in order that a building may be erected thereon, they are designed to support that goodly fabric of faith, hope, and charity, of godliness and righteousness, without which, light in the understanding, and an head full of notions, are as useless as a foundation on which no superstructure is raised: "Be ye therefore doers," &c.—Consider we,

I. THE NATURE OF "THE WORD" HERE SPOKEN OF, AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE COMPARISONS CONTAINED IN THIS PARAGRAPH, AND REPRESENTED AS THE CAUSE, SOURCE, AND RULE OF TRUE RELIGION.

"The word" here is that mentioned ver. 18, and termed "the word of truth," and 1 Pet. i. 23, Heb. iv. 12, "the word of God," and declared to be that of the Gospel, 1 Pet. i. 25. It is doctrinal, preceptive, promissive, comminatory.—It is here compared to a glass.

In the glass of its doctrines we see,—the glory of the Lord, (2 Cor. iii. 18,) of the Father, of Christ,—the meanness of man, of ourselves as creatures, dependant, inferior to angels; formed out of the dust, and returning to it; fallen, depraved, wretched: our dignity and happiness, as redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; capable of rising out of the ruins of our fall, and becoming as angels, yea, like the Son of God. (1 John iii. 2.)

In the glass of its precepts we discover our sinfulness; (our sins of commission and omission, their number and aggravations, with our spots and deformities;) our guilt, (Rom. vii. 9,) our weakness and helplessness. There are glasses which flatter people; but that which is truly the Word of God flatters no man. Let it be really attended to, and it will set before us all the disorders of our hearts and lives that they may be done away, as a glass shows us the spots upon our faces that they may be washed off. — —

In the glass of its promises, we discover the mercy, grace, help, and comfort that are afforded to believers. And we behold ourselves pardoned, renewed, and strengthened, if we comply with the prescribed conditions. — —

In the glass of its threatenings, we behold ourselves accountable creatures, having death as well as life, cursing as well as blessing, set before us. We see ourselves standing on slippery places, hanging between heaven and hell, salvation and damnation; and hence learn the importance of watchfulness and prayer, and of circumspection and close walking with God.—The Word is termed a law, as being a rule of faith and practice, obligatory upon all; acquitting or condemning, and determining our state for ever. A *perfect* law, clear, concise, full, intelligible to all, having nothing superfluous, nothing defective. A *law of liberty*, in opposition to the ceremonial law, which was a “yoke of bondage.” “Christ’s yoke is easy, and his burden light;” his commands are not grievous; giving liberty from the guilt and power of sin, and of the devil, the world, and the flesh; from a spirit of bondage, from slavish fear of God, and from tormenting fear of death and hell. — —

II. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ABUSE, AND OF THOSE WHO IMPROVE THIS IMPORTANT MEANS OF GRACE.

The former content themselves with "hearing only." Some have supposed that the Apostle refers primarily to the Jews, whose doctrine it was,—That to be Abraham's seed was sufficient to obtain for them God's favour, and secure them against his judgments. That circumcision procured them acceptance with God. That all Israelites had a portion in the world to come: and especially, That to be employed in *hearing* and *studying* the law was of itself sufficient.* But it seems more likely that he gives this caution with a reference to the Gnostics, and other Antinomians, that were creeping fast into the church. They were hearers *only*, not even considering the Word, and therefore not understanding its nature or importance; more especially not believing and laying it to heart, not experiencing or reducing it to practice. —

The Apostle compares them to "a man beholding," &c. In the glass of the doctrines they see the glory of God, but are not "changed into the same image;" the glory of Christ, but neither love nor live to him. They see their meanness and wretchedness, but forget, and are not humbled. They see what is their dignity and blessedness, but, not remembering and laying it to heart, are not exalted in their views, desires, hopes, cares, &c., ignorantly and thoughtlessly throwing away what it cost so much to redeem.—In the glass of the precepts they see their sinfulness, guilt, and weakness, but not reflecting on these things, they *go away*, and forget what manner of men they are, and contentedly

* See Whitby on the text, and on Rom. ii. 13.

remain unawakened, unreformed, under the dominion of sin and Satan.—In the glass of the promises they see pardon, holiness, and heaven set before them, to be received by faith, but still remain in unbelief, unpardoned, unchanged, without either a title to, or a meetness for, eternal life.—In the threatenings they see the danger of unwatchfulness, &c., the consequences of impenitence and unbelief set before them, but they still remain in that dangerous state. Hence they are exposed to condemnation, greater than if they had not heard, or had no opportunity of hearing, the Word. (Rom. ii. 9; Heb. x. 28, 29; xii. 25.) — —

As to the state of those who are “doers of the Word.” *Doing the Word* implies a compliance with it;—to consider, discern, believe, experience, and to be influenced by its doctrines;—to obey its precepts, as those that enjoin repentance, faith, love, &c.;—to embrace its promises, such as those that relate to pardon, grace, &c.;—to revere, and stand in awe of its threatenings, and guard against what would expose us to them.—Their character is described ver. 25. They “look into the perfect law of liberty,” &c.; (*παρὰντα*), *stooping, bending down*. It implies study, meditation, self-examination, amendment, transformation, compliance. They “continue therein.” “If ye continue in my Word, ye are my disciples indeed.” They persevere in this way;—are “doers of the work,” and not forgetful hearers.—They attend to their *words* as well as *deeds*. (Ver. 26.) Compare ch. iii. 10—14.* — —

* See Doddridge’s Paraphrase and Notes here.

III. THE NATURE OF THAT RELIGION WHICH THE WORD OF GOD RECOMMENDS, AND WHICH A RIGHT USE OF IT WILL PRODUCE.

“Pure religion,” &c. *Clear*, and without *flaw* or *blemish*. Archbishop Tillotson has justly observed, that there seems to be here an allusion to the excellence of a precious stone, which consists much in its being (*καθαρά και ἀμικτός*) *clear*, and without flaw or cloud.* Thus he describes that religion which is true and genuine, in opposition to that which is false and mistaken: sincere and solid, in opposition to that which is feigned and pretended: pure and holy, in opposition to that which is mixed with the inventions and superstitions of men, and defiled by erroneous principles and vicious practices. But what is this religion? in what does it consist? what are the particulars included in it? The Apostle informs us: It consists, Not in speculations or opinions, however just and orthodox: not in forms or means, whether hearing or any other: not in the warmth of affection or ardour of zeal, &c. during worship. But in consequence of being an *experimental*, it is a *practical* thing, and consists in visiting “the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.”

The fatherless and widows here are put for all those that are in the greatest need of help, as being generally most destitute, most neglected, and most oppressed. Children, in their childhood and youth, are generally dependant on their parents for sustenance, protection, instruction, and all things they want: when deprived of their parents, or even of their fathers, they are often ab-

*Tillotson's Sermons, quoted both by Doddridge and Macknight.

solutely destitute. In like manner, women, when married, are dependant on their husbands for maintenance, protection, &c., and when left widows, are frequently destitute even of necessities.—The fatherless and widows, and such as are dependant on the charity of others, are commonly unknown, despised, overlooked, neglected. Few like to know others in adversity, or take pains to console and relieve them.—Such are peculiarly liable to be dealt unjustly with, to be imposed upon and defrauded, oppressed, and even treated with cruelty, by those who fear not God. Hence, such are often singled out in Scripture, and represented as the fittest objects of charity; but not to the exclusion of others. For many that are not fatherless, are more in want of help than many that are. All the poor and needy are included, and especially the sick.—“In their affliction.”—All, whether men or women, can in general do something for their support while in health, but the sick are disabled from doing this, and also want palatable and nourishing food and medicine.—Perhaps also they are ignorant of divine things, or wicked, or distressed, and want instruction, reproof, exhortation, consolation and direction, how to support and improve by their affliction, and have need to be shown the true *design* of their affliction, whether it be the *chastisement of a Father*, a *trial of their grace*, or a *purifying furnace*.—Perhaps their affliction may be the last they will have on earth; they may be dying in their sins, “without hope,” or deceived by a false hope.

But what is implied in visiting them.—It is seeking them out, and actually visiting them in their own houses. *Houses* did I say? rather in their *cellars* and *garrets*. “I was sick, and ye visited me.” This is of great im-

portance to be done by ourselves, or our substitutes.— Relieving them and supplying their wants. (Job xxix. 11—17; xxxi. 16—21; Isai. lviii. 7, 10.) — Taking the oversight of them in their affliction, as Dr. Doddridge tells us the Greek properly signifies, and may import entering into measures for their subsistence, as well as going to see and converse with them.

In order to this, or that we may have inclination, resolution, fortitude, self-denial, ability, both of mind and body, time and money necessary, we must “keep ourselves unspotted from the world.” We must keep ourselves separate from the people of it; freed from, and unstained by the errors and vices of it, the maxims, customs, and manners of it; delivered from and raised above the objects of it, as “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.”

How does it appear that this is true religion? Religion consists principally in faith and love to God and man. (Gal. v. 6; 1 Tim. i. 5; 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3; 1 John iv. 8.) The most eminent and important fruit of faith and of the love of our neighbour, is not saying “be thou warmed,” &c. (James ii. 14—16; 1 John iii. 17,) but visiting them in their affliction. The most eminent fruit of faith and love to God is purity, or the being dead to the world and unpolluted by it. — —

CCXXXVIII.

TRUE WISDOM DESCRIBED.

JAMES iii. 17

The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

PERHAPS there are few things concerning which mankind in general are so much mistaken, as concerning the nature of wisdom. Many confound it with learning, and consider a person who understands languages, sciences, arts, &c., as a wise man. But do not many such give evident proof, that they either do not understand, or do not pursue their true interest? are they not, in many instances, wicked and miserable? and can such be termed wise? May we not rather say, "They have forsaken the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Others mistake knowledge for wisdom, not considering that a man may have great knowledge and not make a proper use of that knowledge, and therefore not be benefited, but even eventually injured thereby and rendered the more inexcusable. For "he that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin;" and, "he that knoweth his master's will, and doeth not according to it, shall be beaten with many stripes." And surely he who reaps no other fruits from his knowledge than "many stripes," cannot be said to be made wise by it. Others again seem to think, that cunning, craft, and subtilty in pursuing and accomplishing some particular purpose and designed end, is wisdom; but,

on this principle, Satan might be termed a wise being, for he is certainly the most subtle and crafty being in the creation; but who would wish to be wise in such a sense? And do not others judge mere carnal and worldly prudence and selfishness to be wisdom? and consider him as wise who acquires wealth, honor, pleasure, &c.? But, alas! what becomes of this wisdom in a time of sickness, and at a dying hour? Will it then be thought to deserve such an appellation?—Surely religion, and religion alone, is worthy of the name of wisdom, according to the inspired writers. (Job xxviii. 28; Ps. cxi. 10.) But may we not be mistaken even here? is every thing that goes by the name of religion such in reality? By no means. Many think they are religious, and therefore wise, who are self-deceived. So St. James judged, and it will be well to hear him on this subject; “Who is a wise man,” says he, “and endued with knowledge among you, let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom;” true wisdom being always accompanied with meekness. “But if ye have bitter envying,” (*ζηλον*), *zeal*, or zeal accompanied with a bitter spirit, for or against this or that opinion, mode of worship, custom, or practice; or for our own judgment, will, or the point we wish to carry, or the purpose we would effect; “glory not,” &c., as if this was consistent with the truth, or the proper effect of it, or the way of contending for it. “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish;” like that of persons who contend for wealth, pleasure, and honour, and are influenced by covetousness, sensuality, and ambition, by pride, self-will, &c. — — But let us examine.

WHAT IS TRUE WISDOM, OR TRUE RELIGION?

It is (*μεν*,) *indeed* “first pure:”—from essential error, in principle. It believes, embraces, and adheres to the truth as it is in Jesus, and will not relinquish it even for peace. Hence its motives and ends are pure, and its judgment, choice, intention, and affection holy.—From known sin in practice. It will not decline from or neglect to perform any evident duty, much less commit evident sin, even to attain peace. It shuns all sinful compliances.—It is pure from the earthly, sensual, and devilish passions and tempers which characterize the wisdom of this world, and of mistaken or carnal professors. — —

This being secured, it is “peaceable.”—It does not contend about doubtful or unimportant matters, or things belonging to this visible and temporal world, and which do not affect men’s everlasting concerns. If it does not relinquish, it does not contend about, but is silent concerning uncertain opinions or doubtful practices, and “becomes all things to all men,” like St. Paul.—It does not willingly give offence, or take offence, or sow the seeds of discord, or give occasion for strife or contention.—It is also pacific, and promotes peace to the uttermost of its power. — —

In order to this, it is “gentle:”—meek, mild, forbearing, long-suffering, patient towards all:—putting the best possible construction on the motives, intentions, purposes, and pursuits of others in their words and actions:—moderate, in opposition to all heat and bitter zeal; “let your moderation, (*επιεικεις*) be known to all men:” (Phil. iv. 5:)—yielding, not tenacious of our own judgment, will, purpose; not determined, at all events,

to carry our point, but yielding, submitting, (1 Pet. v. 5,) giving up and making many sacrifices for the sake of peace and love; the reverse of being obstinate, or, as some term it, *firm*.—"Easy to be entreated:"—to be convinced of what is proved to be true:—to be persuaded of what is proper to be done:—to be reconciled, when any matters of disgust and contention may have arisen.—"Full of mercy:"—of pity and compassion towards those in error, sin, want and misery:—ready to forgive such as have injured us:—benevolent towards all.—"Full of good fruits:"—such as glorify God:—do not harm but profit mankind:—advance our own and others's holiness and happiness hereafter:—these can only proceed from a good tree.—"Without partiality:"—(*αδιακριτος*;) not distinguishing the nation, profession, opinion, or denomination of those who may be benefited by our exertions or benevolence, but being disposed to do good to all, without partiality to those of our own sentiments or party.—"And without hypocrisy:"—sincerely intending, desiring, seeking, pursuing the good it holds forth, and upright and true-hearted in regard to all the kindness it professes. — —

[These remarks must be followed up, by particularly showing,—the value and importance of this wisdom;—its necessity, in order to true religion and happiness;—and, lastly, how it is to be attained, and urging to the attainment of it.]

CCXXXIX.

THE AUTHOR AND MEANS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

1 PETER i. 3, 4.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

As the resurrection of Christ was a fact perfectly unprecedented, and the most extraordinary that ever happened, he being the first that burst the barriers of the tomb, and rose to an immortal life; so it is a fact the most important to mankind of all others, and productive of the best consequences. It demonstrates the truth of our Lord's claim of being the Messiah, and declares him to be "the Son of God with power," (Rom. i. 4,) and thus lays a firm foundation for faith in him. It confirms his doctrine, and manifests beyond all doubt, the certain truth and deep importance of it. It shows the acceptableness and efficacy of his sacrifice offered for sin, and that provision is made for the remission of it, and the justification of penitent sinners. It opens an intercourse between God and man, between heaven and earth, and makes way for our receiving the Holy Ghost; since he rose that he might ascend, and ascended that he might intercede and appear in the presence of God as our Advocate and Forerunner. And what is perhaps best of all, it opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers,—opens before us a clear and bright pros-

pect of an immortal life. As this is a subject little understood, and less attended to, and yet of infinite moment to us, and very full of consolation, and that at a time when nothing else can give consolation, amidst the decay of nature, the death of friends, and the fall of empires; and as it is certainly a most capital doctrine of christianity, and, of all others, most necessary to be understood, I shall now beg leave to call your attention to it, as it is offered to our consideration by St. Peter in the words of our text; in discoursing on which I shall take occasion to inquire,

I. OF WHOM THE APOSTLE SPEAKS HERE, WHO ARE BEGOTTEN AGAIN TO A LIVELY HOPE?

Their state and character are laid before us in the preceding verses. They were “strangers;” not only as being, partly through persecution, and partly perhaps on a mercantile account, removed to a distance from their own country, and sojourning in the provinces mentioned, (ver. 1,) but as all men, and especially all the people of God, are “strangers and sojourners on earth.” (Gen. xlvii. 9; 1 Chron. xxix. 15; Ps. xxxix. 12; Heb. xi. 13.) We have not been long in this world, and shall not be long in it. Like strangers in a country, we are in it on a business of great importance. In a country not our own; among a people not our own; in an habitation not our own; *i. e.* the body, wherein we are little known, little regarded.—“Elect:” *Called*, by the Word, Spirit, and providence of God, to repentance towards God and to faith in Christ, &c. In consequence of obeying the call, *chosen* to be the children of God, (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; John i. 12.) See this matter explained in 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. [Show how this “is according to

the foreknowledge of God.”]—“Through sanctification of the Spirit.” This implies an internal change, the first part of which is termed *regeneration*, (John i. 13,) or *a new creation*, (2 Cor. v. 17, Tit. iii. 5,) or putting off the old man, &c. Eph. iv. 22—24.) This produces power over sin, (1 Pet. iv. 1, 2; Rom. vi. 14;) the devil, (1 Pet. v. 9;) the world, (1 John v. 4;) and the flesh, (Rom. iii. 2;) consecration to God and his service, in heart and life, and the being employed for him; an increasing conformity to Christ and God.—“Unto obedience;” internal, to the great law of love to God and man, with all holy dispositions connected with it; external, to all his known commands; universal, constant, persevering. (Psal. cxix. 6; 1 John iii. 7, 10.)—“And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.” By this we are introduced into a state of justification and peace with God, being freed from an evil conscience, and rendered capable of obedience. (Heb. ix. 13, 14.) Hereby also our obedience is rendered acceptable.—Such being the “children of God” by adoption and regeneration, and his “heirs,” (Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iv. 5—7,) have a title to the heavenly inheritance, and may hope for it. But we inquire,

II. WHAT IS THIS HOPE; ITS NATURE AND OBJECT?

Its *nature*.—Hope has always a respect to what is good, or apprehended to be good, and therefore implies *desire*, which is always more or less fervent, increasing and restless in proportion to the view we have of the suitableness, excellency, or necessity of the good desired, and the taste or relish we have for it.—It has a respect to what is future, and not yet attained, and implies expectation, which is more or less lively and con-

fidant in proportion as we are more or less assured of the attainableness of that good, and of our being in the way to attain it.

The *object* of a christian's hope is an "inheritance." This implies, that we have none on earth. Man had, when first created, inherited paradise, with all the pleasures of it. The world with all the creatures in it were made for his use and enjoyment, or his service. God and his holy angels were his portion. But by sin all was forfeited and lost: sin being treason and rebellion against the Sovereign Lord. Nay, our own bodies are forfeited to divine justice, by which alone we can have any intercourse with any thing in this visible world. And though we are not immediately turned out of possession, we shall be soon. But as children of God and brethren of Christ, we stand entitled to an heavenly inheritance, termed such because we are heirs of it.

As to the qualities of this inheritance. It is "incorruptible." Every thing here is corruptible, tending in its own nature, to dissolution and decay. We possess also all we enjoy here by that which is corruptible, the body, all the senses and members of which are soon enfeebled and impaired, and incapable of performing their offices. But the inheritance we expect is not corruptible in itself, as being partly spiritual, consisting in the vision and enjoyment of God, &c., and partly of such refined matter as is not capable of dissolution, as the new world which the Lord will reveal. Nor shall we that enjoy it be corruptible, either in soul, whereby we shall see and enjoy God, or in body, whereby we shall have connection with that new world.—"Undefiled;" every thing here is therefore corruptible, because it

has been defiled with the sin of man, and laid under a curse from God. Hence vanity and misery (Rom. viii. 20,) are attached to every thing that is terrestrial. We that possess it are defiled in soul and body, in which we have all the seeds of vanity and misery, which blast all our enjoyments of the creature. But the inheritance above is undefiled in itself. No sin, no curse, no vanity, no misery will belong to it. (Rev. xxii. 3.) We shall be perfectly pure in soul and body, and shall have in ourselves no hinderance to the most perfect enjoyment.—It “fadeth not away.” Every thing here decays in lustre and glory, in sweetness, or in the pleasure it yields in the enjoyment, and in value to us, who can only have a life estate in any thing on earth. All we have is, therefore, continually decreasing in worth or value to us, as the time approaches when we are to be put out of possession. [Illustrate this.] Suppose a man to enter upon the possession of an estate of £500 per annum at twenty years of age, and to live to be seventy, he has at first fifty times £500 to receive; after ten years, only forty times, &c. —

Where is the inheritance reserved? “In heaven;” were it on earth, it would be liable to those continual changes to which all things on earth are subject.

“Here teems with revolutions every hour.”

“Each moment has its sickle, emulous
Of time’s enormous scythe, whose ample sweep
Strikes empires from the root.”——

Where are the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, Roman Empires? The great cities,—Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Alexandria? The great names and families,—Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, &c.? In heaven all is constant, safe, durable, &c. —

This inheritance, the persons above described earnestly desire, (2 Cor. v. 1—8,) and joyfully expect. (Rom. viii. 35; Tit. ii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 12.) Such is their hope; such its object, and such its nature. It is lively, proceeding from spiritual and leading to eternal life. But how is it obtained? how are we “begotten again” to it? This is the next point to be considered.

III. THE AUTHOR OF THIS HOPE IN US.

“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Not we ourselves.—Our ignorance and unbelief are hinderances to us insuperable, in the way. We cannot by mere reason and the light of nature, find out whether there is such an inheritance, or any life at all after this. The heathen nations, even Greece and Rome, were not assured of the immortality of the soul, and knew nothing of the resurrection of the body, or of the eternal life, felicity, and glory reserved for the righteous. If we are informed of these things, unbelief is in the way: how shall we be assured of the truth of the information?—Our guilt is another hinderance, to us insuperable. We are condemned, on account of past sin, and exposed to wrath, and in and of ourselves we have not, nor can by works of righteousness obtain or procure, a title to any future felicity.—Our depravity is another hinderance to our hopes. We neither have nor can produce in ourselves a meetness or qualification, or even a taste or relish for so pure, spiritual, and divine a felicity as that reserved in heaven. Without a spiritual mind, which we cannot work in ourselves, it cannot be enjoyed.—Our weakness is another hinderance: the inheritance is for such only as overcome their enemies; (Rev. ii. 7, &c. *passim*, and all the seven letters;) for such as

experience and practise the will of God; (Matt. vii. 21,) inwardly and outwardly; for such as suffer his will. (Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.) These things we cannot do of ourselves. (John xv. 5; 2 Cor. iii. 5.) The inheritance is in heaven; we are on earth; death will come and separate the soul and body, and give the body to the dust. We cannot of ourselves even take care of our departing souls, and transport them to this inheritance, much less can we raise our fallen and corrupted bodies. —

God is the author of this hope, and hath made ample provision for the removal of all these hinderances by the one single fact here spoken of; “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”—By this God removes our ignorance and unbelief. For Christ, in his doctrine, had most explicitly taught the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body. and a future and eternal state; explaining, as far as we are capable of conceiving of it, the nature of that state: and his resurrection confirmed that doctrine; for had it been false, surely God would not have brought from the dead him who taught it. In Christ’s own resurrection, for “he rose the first fruits of those that slept,” God hath given us a pledge, earnest, and example of our resurrection and immortality. (1 Thess. iv. 14; Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Cor. xv. 20—23, 48—50.) Hereby our guilt is removed, if we be penitent and believe in him. For his resurrection assures us that the atonement he made for sin is accepted. Hence we are assured he rose for our justification. [Explain this matter on the ground of Christ’s being our surety, and imprisoned in death and the grave for our offences, and at his resurrection released, as having paid our debt.] Thus also a way is made for the remo-

val of our depravity. For he rose that he might ascend, and ascended that he might intercede, and receive for us the Holy Ghost to renew and purify us. (Ps. lxxiii. 18; Acts ii. 32, 33.) The human nature ascended in him, that a communication might be opened between heaven and earth, and the divine might descend into man's soul. The obstruction from our weakness is also thus removed. Being raised from the dead, he ever lives to communicate to us grace to enable us to resist and conquer the enemies that oppose our salvation, to do and suffer the will of God, and to persevere to the end in the right way. Thus we are "kept by *the* power of God, by faith." As our Forerunner, he has entered to prepare a place for us, and will come again to receive us—our souls. (John xiv. 1; xvii. 24; Acts vii. 59; Phil. i. 21—23:)—to raise our bodies, having "the keys of death." (2 Tim. i. 12; Phil. iii. 21.)

The source of all this, God's "abundant mercy;" his compassion for us in our state of ignorance, guilt, depravity, and weakness; his undeserved love and goodness; his readiness, even to pass by and pardon our guilt, and save us by grace. This has laid the foundation of our hope.

The gratitude due to God for this ground of hope:—that we are not left in ignorance or uncertainty whether there is an immortal state, but are assured of it on the most solid ground: that our past guilt need not prevent our attaining it, being fully assured this is expiated, and may be forgiven: that our depravity need not hinder, the Holy Spirit being procured for us: nor our weakness; he who is risen from the dead being our near kinsman, and having all power, being able to save to the uttermost, and being risen "*the first fruits* of them that

sleep." But we must build on this foundation, and thus show our gratitude; must consider it, acquaint ourselves with, and believe in Christ's doctrine, depend on his merits, apply for and receive his Spirit, confide in his power, and live in obedience to Him, who is the author of eternal salvation only to those that obey him.

APPLICATION.

Are you convinced there is such a foundation? Have you built thereon, as above? Are you conducting yourselves as strangers? and are you elect, &c., and therefore begotten again to this hope? and is it "lively," or living, proceeding from spiritual, and leading to eternal life?—If so, be thankful for so great a gift, and for the abundant mercy of the Giver.

IMPROVEMENT.

Have we such happiness in prospect? Then let us patiently bear tribulation, even the death of those that are near and dear to us. (Rom. v. 3; 1 Thess. iv. 13.) "Rejoice in hope," &c. (Rom. v. 2; 1 Pet. i. 6, 8.) "Purify ourselves." (1 John iii. 3.) Continue in well-doing. (1 Cor. xv. 58; Rom. ii. 7; Gal. vi. 9; Heb. vi. 12.)—We have great encouragement in the promises set before us.—Our reward will be in proportion to our works. —

CCXL.

THE CHRISTIAN'S REASONS FOR JOY OVER-
BALANCE THOSE HE HAS FOR GRIEF.

1 PETER i. 6, 7.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

MY hearers in general will allow, that if we desire to entertain just views of the nature of true religion, it is necessary we should keep close to Scripture and sound experience, and not yield to imagination, which would greatly mislead us. Through hearkening to this, some have conceived and represented christianity to be a state of uninterrupted joy and consolation; a state peculiar to paradise, or the third heaven; the state of "the spirits of the just made perfect" immediately after death; or that of the glorified after the resurrection. Others again speak of it as a state of continual gloom and sorrow, which is to make it a kind of punishment. The truth is, it is like our condition on earth, a mixed state. The christian certainly has his joys, but he also has his sorrows. The former, however, if he be a genuine christian, and live up to his privileges, exceed the latter, as we shall easily see upon an attentive inquiry. [Refer to the former discourse, and explain the context.]—Consider we,

I. THE REASONS WHICH A TRUE CHRISTIAN HAS TO REJOICE.

These are suggested in the preceding verses; as that he is one of God's "elect:" not only called by the Gospel, the grace and providence of God, but, in consequence of having obeyed the call in repentance and faith. "chosen:" implying his justification, his being taken into favour with God, his being made God's child. All these are causes for unspeakable joy.—That he has experienced a measure, at least, of the "sanctification of the Spirit," is regenerated and created anew, and therefore has cause of rejoicing in the good work wrought in him; a work of absolute necessity and great excellency, making him holy and godlike.—That the proper fruit of this is brought forth in "obedience," productive of "a conscience void of offence," and therefore of peace of mind, and of joy. (2 Cor. i. 12.)—That the blood of Jesus is at hand to sprinkle his conscience, and keep him clear of that guilt which must otherwise arise from the defects of his obedience. This is a great cause of joy also.—That he is "begotten again to a lively hope of an heavenly inheritance," &c. (Rom. v. 2; xii. 12.) This is a grand cause for rejoicing.—That this inheritance is of such a nature—"incorruptible, undefiled," &c.—That it is not given to us here while we are in our minority, and are not capable of enjoying it, but "reserved;" and that not on earth, where all is fluctuation and uncertainty, but "in heaven."—That he is "kept" to this inheritance: kept in a well-grounded and lively hope, and therefore in humility, and in every other grace; for the graces of the Spirit cannot be separated from each other, although some may excel more in one

grace, and others in another. Kept in a warm attachment to, and steady profession of, the truth which reveals the inheritance, and the way to insure it. Kept in the enjoyment of the grace which justifies, adopts, and entitles us to the promise: what reason for joy, if preserved in that grace! Kept in the enjoyment of the grace which prepares us for it, or in increasing sanctification. Kept in the way of duty and obedience, which leads to it.—That it is “the power,” not of ourselves, or of men or angels, which might be overcome by subtlety or force, but “of God,” which keeps us (*ῥᾶπτει*) as in a garrison, or fortified place.—That it is in the simple and easy way of faith, in the truth and grace of God, in which we are kept. — —

II. THE REASONS HE HAS FOR SORROW.

“Though now for a season, if need be,” (*εἰ δεῖν ἐστὶ*), “ye are in heaviness,” (*λυπηθέντες*), *grieved*, in sorrow, “through manifold temptations,” or trials, the causes of this sorrow or grief. “Many” in number. Such as respect our character,—as reproach, revilings, &c.; our property,—losses, poverty, want; our family,—reproach, poverty, sickness, or death of any member of it;—our body, as infirmity, sickness, pain. Such as respect our soul:—doubts as to our acceptance with God, fears of falling away, the corruptions of nature, the fiery darts of the enemy, as blasphemous thoughts, persecution, and ill usage from the wicked. These, and such like things, are painful and grievous to flesh and blood.—“Manifold.” (*πολλοίς*.) Not only of different kinds, but those of the same kind in different degrees, and varied exceedingly as to time, place, and circumstances, so as to appear new, and have increased force. — —

III. THAT HIS REASONS FOR JOY OUTWEIGH THOSE FOR SORROW; NAY, THAT HIS REASONS FOR SORROW, WHEN PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD AND IMPROVED, BECOME EVEN REASONS FOR JOY.

The reasons for sorrow in a child of God, however, many and great, can be only finite. But the reasons for joy are all infinite. They are indeed infinite in number, as infinite as the perfections, mercies, and benefits of the Godhead, &c., and infinite in greatness.—The reasons for sorrow, in a real and persevering christian, can be but temporal; nay, “but for a moment.” (2 Cor. iv. 17.) The reasons for joy are eternal; as eternal as our raised bodies will be, our souls, the new city, the new heaven and new earth, the inheritance, the crown, throne, saints, angels, as Christ, and God himself.—The reasons for sorrow really become reasons for joy. For, through the grace of God in the Gospel, these trials are the chastisements of an infinitely kind and wise Father; and being chastened, we are amended, and therefore not condemned with the world. Nay, we are made partakers of his holiness, in a higher degree than we otherwise could have been, and so are fitted for a greater degree of glory. (Heb. xii. 10.) They all proceed, not from hatred, but from love, and tend to our profit. They are trials of our grace, and manifest the reality and the degree of it to ourselves and others,—as of our faith, hope, love, humility, resignation, patience, contentment, meekness: exercising it, they cause it to continue and increase. Hence also arise greater stability, usefulness, and happiness here, and a greater reward hereafter. This is therefore further cause of joy. They are a kind of purifying fur-

naces. We are purged in them from all remaining dross, and rendered without spot or wrinkle; are refined as silver is refined, purged as gold, &c.—Thus we see, as the Apostle says, that “all things are ours,” even pain and death, and work for our good.

INFER,

The great mistake of those who are averse to, or delay embracing religion, as an uncomfortable and melancholy thing. It appears from what has been said, that it is quite the reverse: that it is the chief, nay, the only true source of consolation. Have you been involved in this error?—The mistake of those also who expect that religion should free them from trials and troubles. It will support us under them, sanctify them to us, and turn them into gain, but will not free us from them.—It is not the name, nor the mere profession of religion, that will either make it a source of comfort, or a support, &c., under troubles: only the real enjoyment of it will do this.—We see in this whole matter, the absolute necessity of faith and meditation. What are these reasons for joy, if they be not received in faith, and laid to heart? We see also the necessity of continual prayer for the Divine Spirit, without which we shall not understand nor relish, much less be influenced by these reasons. — —

CCXLI.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD CALLED TO SPEND
THEIR TIME IN FEAR.

1 PETER i. 17—24.

If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

FROM these words consider,

I. THE CHARACTER OF ALL GOD'S PEOPLE.

They are men of prayer. "They call on the Father," &c. This has been the character of God's people in every age, and under every dispensation. In the early ages before the flood, when some began to be religious, they "began to call upon the name of the Lord." (Gen. iv. 26.) The patriarchs all did this. (Gen. xiii. 3, 4.) The prophets, from Moses to David, from David to Malachi, Christ and his apostles, were all men of prayer. (Luke xi. 1; Acts i. 12; vi. 4.) All christians are described as calling on the Lord, Joel ii. 32; Acts

ii. 21; Rom. x. 12—14; 1 Cor. i. 2.—They are earnest and importunate in prayer. “They call on the name of the Lord,” whether they pray in private, with their families, in social meetings, or in public, their praying is a calling on the name, &c.—They “call on the Father;” they pray to him, as to a father, by creation, preservation, redemption:—as reconciled to them in Christ; they therefore pray with confidence:—they pray to him as to a judge, and therefore pray with humility and self-abasement, and for those things which will fit them to stand at his bar; for pardon, holiness, and grace to do and suffer his whole will: they pray to him, as one who is no “respector of persons;” and therefore, on the one hand, are persuaded the blessings they ask are as free for them as others; and, on the other, put no confidence in any advantages of birth or church-fellowship, or in their knowledge or past experience, but endeavour to form their lives to a consistency with their prayers. —

II. THEIR DUTY.

To “pass the time of their sojourning here in fear.”—They are *sojourners*. Their time of abode in this world is short and uncertain. They are on their journey continually: and passing swiftly through time to eternity. They are subject to many difficulties and dangers, trials and troubles, from visible and invisible foes, from within and from without, while pursuing their journey. They are here in a strange land, in a country not their own, among a strange people. They ought to “pass the time in fear;” in a reverential fear of God, (Heb. xii. 28,) because of his glory and majesty, his wisdom and power, his holiness and justice, &c.; in a filial fear of offending or grieving so kind a Father; in an awful fear of him as

a judge. (Matt. x. 28.) “They that fear God least,” said one, “have the greatest reason to fear him.” In a suspicious fear of ourselves, lest our self-love should make us flatter ourselves, as though God were a respecter of persons; “lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, we should come short of it.” (Heb. iv. 1.) In a watchful fear, lest through the deceitfulness of sin, and the subtlety, power, &c., of our enemies, we should relapse into our vain conversation, or be infected by the example of those among whom we live. A fear of departing from God is the chief means to preserve us from departing from him.— —

III. THEIR MOTIVE FOR THIS.

“Forasmuch,” &c. [Explain from ver. 18—21:*

This mysterious plan of redemption manifests God’s infinite holiness and justice, and shows him to be most tremendous, and therefore an object of our greatest reverence.—It manifests his mercy, love, and goodness, and shows the propriety and necessity of filial fear.—It manifests the infinite worth of the soul, which cost so much to redeem it; the dreadful loss they will sustain, and the great punishment they will meet with from the great Judge, who reject this redemption, and forfeit its blessings. Hence the necessity of a jealous and a constant fear.—It shows the great evil of that “vain conversation” from which we are redeemed, and the propriety of a watchful fear, lest we relapse into it.—The people of God know these things, and will be

* See a note in Whitby, on ver. 20, in which he speaks of Christ’s being foreknown, fore-approved, or fore-appointed, and refers to the representation of the ancient Jews concerning the covenant made with the Messiah before the creation.

inexcusable if they do not lay them to heart, and improve them accordingly. “Forasmuch as ye know,” &c. — —

CCXLII.

A BEHAVIOUR TO BE MAINTAINED WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL.

1 PETER ii. 11, 12.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

How glorious and sacred is the character of the disciples of Christ! how important their office, and how powerful the motives which compel them to fulfil it! As to their *character*, they are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,” &c. As to their *office*, it is simply and only to “show forth his praises.” The motives are, that they have been called “out of darkness into marvellous light,” &c. — Consider,

I. THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH THE APOSTLE ADDRESSES CHRISTIANS.

He calls them “strangers and pilgrims,” removed from their native country through persecution, or on account of trade. (Ch. i. 1.) Not settled inhabitants of the world. (Heb. xiii. 14.) We have not been long in it: shall not be long in it. While we are in the world, we are in it on a matter of great importance; to ac-

quire the knowledge and love of God, his favour, image, and communion with him, and to serve our generation: we must then remove to our eternal home. Like strangers in a place, christians are little known, little regarded. (*παροηστους*,) In a *strange house*. The soul is sojourning in the body as in a hired house, or in a tent, or tabernacle, which is moveable, and will soon be taken down. (Heb. xi. 9, 13.) In a country not our own; (*παρεπιδημους*;) this earth being forfeited by sin, must be taken from us, and we from it; must be consigned to the general conflagration. Hence the things we enjoy on earth, are said to be “not our own.” Among a people not our own; the whole world lying in wickedness, or in the wicked one. — —

II. THE ADVICE GIVEN.

“Abstain from fleshly lusts.” These lusts or desires are termed “fleshly,” (*σαρκικων*,) *carnal*, as having their origin and seat in our flesh, i. e. in our *animal* nature; our senses, appetites, and passions ministering to them, by presenting the objects of them, or stimulating us to pursue them; in our *corrupt* nature, which furnishes the seeds of these desires, and prompts to indulge them. As to their nature, they are *earthly desires*, viz., of obtaining and laying up riches in a world where we are strangers and pilgrims, where we stay but a little while, have no interest, and on which we can have no hold: *sensual desires*, viz., of carnal pleasure, where we are in an unsettled, wandering, and pilgrimage state; desires of pleasure belonging to that inferior and mortal part which must soon be put off: *devilish desires*, as of praise and honour, where, at best, we are little known and little regarded. — *Irregular and inordinate desires*. — —

The reason why we should abstain from these desires, is, “they war against the soul:”—against its health, its strength, its liberty, its purity, its usefulness, as depriving us both of the means or power, and of the inclination or will to do good works. Hence, in order to our “visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction,” we are exhorted to “keep ourselves unspotted from the world.”—Against its present comfort, as depriving it of a sense of the divine favour, of union and communion with him, of an hope of immortality, and even of a good conscience, and of peace of mind.—Therefore they war against its future reward, blessedness, and glory.—

We must have “our conversation honest among the Gentiles.” The Greek word (*αναστροφην*,) means our whole deportment, our tempers, words, and works. This must be “honest,” true, just; we must maintain a fair character on all occasions. How important this!—(*καλην*.) Amiable, maintaining an humble, meek, and kind spirit:—commendable and honourable, being unblamable and useful in our conduct: “putting on bowels of mercy,” liberality, and performing all those good works which are for the credit of our profession, and for God’s glory.—This leads me to—

III. THE END WE SHOULD HAVE IN VIEW.

The credit of the Gospel, and of our profession of it. “That whereas they speak against you,” &c. Carnal people hate and malign the people of God; and are glad to have a pretence for doing it. Professors, too, often furnish them with it. It is of vast importance not to afford them occasion to speak against us, but to put them to silence and shame. (Ver. 15; ch. iii. 16.)—The

glory of God. He is glorified when his people behave in the manner here enjoined, particularly by the good works they do, and more especially by such good works as are evidently disinterested, and such as we cannot do, without parting with our property, our ease, pleasure, &c., and denying our own desires. (Phil. i. 11; John xv. 8; Heb. xiii. 16.)—The reformation and salvation of mankind, particularly of those to whom we do good, and others who by means of our christian behaviour may be convinced of the truth, impressed by its importance, yield to its influence, and themselves “glorify God in the day of visitation,” i. e., when God in any peculiar way, as by his gospel, or his grace, or his judgments, or his mercies, visits them.

APPLICATION.

You are “strangers and pilgrims, and have here no continuing city:” it is therefore reasonable you should “abstain from fleshly lusts,” &c.—You, as christians, are probably spoken against, and misrepresented as evil doers; therefore, you should, by an honest, amiable, and commendable conversation, stop their mouths, and put them to silence.—This is the day of England’s visitation: we should be “workers together with God,” that it may not be in vain; but that many may be influenced to obey the call of God, and turn to him.—We “beseech you,” and you owe something to us, and it should be your desire, that our labours and care for you, that you may understand and receive the gospel, may not be in vain. — —

CCXLIII.

CHRISTIANS REPRESENTED AS SHEEP THAT
HAVE RETURNED TO THE SHEPHERD AND
BISHOP OF THEIR SOULS.

1 PETER ii. 25.

*Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned
unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

THE most inattentive reader of the Holy Scriptures cannot but observe, I think, that they every where suppose that those who are now the people of God, were not, in general, always so, but have undergone a change, and that, both of state and of nature: once they were under guilt and condemnation, and were exposed to the divine wrath; but now they are justified, taken into favour with God, and made his children. Once they were “carnally-minded; which is death;” yea, “earthly, sensual, and devilish:” but now they are “spiritually-minded, which is life and peace;” have “put off concerning the former conversation the old man,” and are “renewed in the spirit of their mind,” and “have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Thus St. Paul saith to the Ephesians, “Ye who were once afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”—Ye are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints.” Ye that “were once darkness, are now light in the Lord;” ye “that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, he hath now reconciled” And lest it should be supposed that he spake only of such as had been brought up heathens,

after he had said (Eph. ii. 1,) "you hath he quickened, who were dead in sins," he adds, "among whom we all had our conversation in times past." And, (Tit. iii. 3,) "we ourselves, also, were sometime, (that is formerly,) foolish, disobedient," &c. St. Peter speaks the same language exactly, although he was the apostle of the circumcision, and wrote chiefly to such as had been Jews, and were brought up in the visible church. In the former part of this chapter he says, "He hath translated you out of darkness into his marvellous light." In time past ye were not a people, but are now the people of God:" "who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." And in my text again, "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned," &c.—In this whole paragraph, St. Peter evidently refers to Isai. liii. 4—12, with which passage compare ver. 19—25 of this chapter. In particular, ver. 25 refers to Isai. iii. 6, with which agrees Jer. l. 6; Ps. cxix. 176.—Consider,

I. THE STATE IN WHICH ALL, EVEN REAL CHRISTIANS, ARE BY NATURE.

"Ye were as sheep going astray."—Negatively. Sheep are innocent and harmless creatures; they neither injure any creature, nor return any injury received. And real christians are compared to them in this view, because it is their desire and endeavour to be unblamable in their temper and behaviour; free from all evil, from all known sin in their dispositions, words, and actions, and especially from doing harm to any fellow creature, saint or sinner. (Phil. ii. 15.) But this is not the reason of the comparison here. Man by nature is sinful. (Rom. iii. 10—23; Eph. ii. 1.) In particular, man natu-

rally both revenges injuries that are done to him, and does injuries unprovoked. (Rom. iii. 13—16.)—Sheep are useful creatures; they feed us with their milk or flesh, and clothe us with their wool. Real christians are useful; they give their bread to the hungry, and clothing to the naked, &c. But as men are by nature, they are not compared to sheep, for this reason, for “they are together become unprofitable.” (Rom. iii. 12.)—Sheep are meek and patient. So real christians: they do not fret, murmur, or repine under the trials that come immediately from God; nor are they provoked to wrath or resentment by the affronts or injuries they receive from man. But is it natural for man to be such? By no means; but quite the reverse. (Gal. v. 20.) Among the works of the flesh, are “wrath, emulations, strife,” &c.—Sheep are gregarious and sociable; they flock together; are loving to each other, and it is distressing to them to be separated from each other. But the carnal and unregenerate, although they may associate, do not really love each other.—Sheep know well their shepherd and his voice; their pasture and fold. So do real christians. (John x. 14.) But not so the unconverted: they know not Jesus. (Jer. l. 6.)—This, therefore, is not the reason of the comparison.—

But positively, “ye were as sheep going astray.” They are compared to sheep for ignorance, folly, and liableness to deception. (Rom. iii. 11; Eph. iv. 18; Tit. iii. 3.) “Going astray” (Isai. liii. 6,) from the way of *truth* into *error*; of *wisdom* into *folly*; of *duty* towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves, into every species of sin; from repentance, faith, holiness, and consequently happiness, into the paths of impenitence, unbelief, and misery.—Going astray from Christ the Shepherd.

whom we do not follow; (John x. 3, 4;) whose voice we do not hear or obey; whom we do not love or care for; whom we do not know, and under whose care, guidance, and government, we refuse to be placed.—From the flock of the righteous, whom we do not love, whose example we do not imitate, with whom we do not associate, but intermix with the goats, and wolves, and dogs. And what can be the consequence, but destruction?—From the green pastures of the word and ordinances, the still waters of Divine peace and consolation, (Ps. xlv. 4,) the safe and comfortable fold of the visible church, under the Divine protection and care, (Isai. xxvi. 1; Ps. xci,) upon the barren, bleak, exposed, and dangerous mountains of sin, nature's corruption, or upon the dry and sandy deserts of a formal religion.—Alienated from, and lost to, righteousness and life; the life of grace here, and of glory hereafter.—Through the devious ways of error and sin, running headlong to destruction. "Such were, and such probably still are, some of you," &c.—But,

II. TRUE BELIEVERS AND DISCIPLES OF CHRIST HAVE RETURNED TO HIM AS "THE SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF SOULS."

Man would never return, were he not sought by Christ. He has no inclination to return, but, like a lost sheep upon the mountains, or like the prodigal, (Luke xv. 4, 11,) he goes further and further astray. If he had an inclination, he has not knowledge: he knows not the way back to the shepherd, and the flock; to the pasture, and the fold. If he had both inclination and knowledge, he has not courage and ability: dangers and difficulties, many and great, are in the way. The goats

will push him, if they find he is for leaving them, and oppose his return. The dogs (the persecutors) are between him and the flock of Christ, and will endeavour to worry him. The wolf, the grand enemy, will place himself in the way of his returning, and will strive to devour him. Rivers of tears, sorrow, and distress, are in the way; bogs of dejection and despondency; hedges and walls of opposition from men and things; yea, and barren wastes, perhaps of loss and indigence, &c.: and, like a sheep, he is timorous, and without strength, through want of grace, or because pushed by the goats, or bitten by the dogs. Christ seeks the lost sheep, (Matt. xviii. 11—13; Luke xix. 10; xv. 4—6,) by his providence, Word, and Spirit. He *calls* and *draws* them to him by his grace. (Ps. cxix. 176; Gal. iv. 9; Isai. lxxv. 1; John x. 16.) Hence arise repentance and faith. (Luke xv. 17, 18.) Having now gotten an inclination, we depend on our Shepherd, who has sought and found us, for direction and help, and are determined to leave the goats, the barren mountains, the dry wastes, where we were perishing, and to make our way back to the Shepherd, the pasture, the flock, and the fold, in spite of all the difficulties and dangers, the goats, dogs, or wolves, that are in the way to oppose us. When we have entered in by Christ, the door of the sheep, his Word, his merits, his Spirit, into the *fold*, (the visible church,) the pasture, and amongst the flock; then we are “returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.”—Are you thus returned?

III. WHY IS CHRIST REPRESENTED UNDER THESE CHARACTERS; AND WHAT MAY HIS PEOPLE EXPECT FROM HIM ACCORDING TO THEM?

He has the care and government of our souls, as a shepherd of sheep. (Ezek. xxxiv. 23; xxxvii. 24; Hos. iii. 5; Isai. xl. 11; Mic. v. 4; Heb. xiii. 20.)—He has under him other shepherds, (1 Pet. v. 1—4,) and he is the chief. He styles himself “the good Shepherd.” (John x. 11.) Whatever be the properties of a good shepherd, they are all found in him.—A shepherd should know his sheep. Man, to help the imperfection of his knowledge, generally sets a particular mark upon his sheep; probably the initials of his own name. Christ also marks his sheep, although not to assist his knowledge. He imprints his name, his nature upon them. They “depart from iniquity,” and bear his image; and hereby he marks them for his, and knows them as such. (2 Tim. ii. 19; John x. 14.) How great the extent and perfection of this knowledge. (Rev. ii. 23.) He knows perfectly every individual of his flock; their states, disorders, wants, dangers, difficulties, ways, &c. —

A shepherd should love his sheep. This is essential to the character of a good shepherd. He should be willing to take any pains, endure any hardship, and expose himself to any danger, for their good: (Gen. xxxi. 40:) even to risk his life for them, as David. (1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35.) What hath not Christ done and suffered! the pains he hath taken, the hardships, the dangers he hath endured! He hath more than exposed, he hath actually “laid down his life” for the sheep. (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) This no mortal shepherd ever did, nor was it any shepherd’s duty, a man being much better than a sheep, than many sheep; but this Christ hath done. (John x. 11, 19.)

A good shepherd cares for his sheep; so Christ. For he is not an hireling; (John x. 12;) the sheep are his

own originally, as he is his Father's Son and Heir, heir of all things, and indeed the Maker and Preserver of the sheep. By *purchase*, for he is their Redeemer; having assumed their nature, and become their kinsman to redeem them. (Heb. ii. 16, 17; Acts xx. 28.) Hence they are doubly his, by nature and purchase; therefore he cares for them.—How? For their safety, and provides a fold for them, to which he brings them, seeking them if lost; and in which he defends them by his almighty power;—for their health, and binds them up, if broken; strengthens them if weak; heals them if sick; (Ezek. xxxiv. 4;) by his merits, and Spirit, and word:—for their growth; therefore he provides pasture for them; his word and ordinances, and the waters of consolation: thus they thrive and grow fat; but not like sheep for slaughter, for he gives them everlasting life. (John x. 28.)—

A good shepherd, in those countries, went before his sheep, and gave particular names to his sheep, as we do to horses, or dogs; and, calling them by name, led them, playing sometimes on some musical instrument, or by some peculiar sounds.* Thus Christ conducts us in the way to the kingdom; he goes before his sheep, and rather *leads* than *drives*, calling them by name, and they follow him; “carrying the lambs in his bosom.” (Isai. xl. 11.) In the mean time,—

He is the “bishop,” also, of their souls: (ἐπισκοπος,) the *superintendent, inspector, visitor*. He diligently attends to the direction, protection, and government of his sheep.—He watches over them, considers their infirmities and wants, and takes continual care of their salvation, till he has brought them to eternal life. — —

* See Pool's Synopsis on John x. 3, 4.

CCXLIV

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, THEIR CAUSE
AND DESIGN.

1 PETER iii. 18.

*Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,
that he might bring us to God.*

A VERY slight acquaintance with the religion of the once suffering but now highly exalted Jesus will convince us, that it supposes that all its genuine disciples will be more or less persecuted, and exposed to sufferings in the flesh, as their Master was before them. But we shall see also, that it furnishes such sufferers with the noblest considerations, and most powerful motives that can be imagined, to fortify their minds, and support their spirits under these trials; while at the same time it teaches them to receive all their sufferings in the very spirit of their Master. It instructs them to encounter the most outrageous violence of their persecutors with no other weapons than those of patience, meekness, and love; and to silence the cavils, and blast the machinations of their bitterest enemies, with the splendour of a pure and holy life, and the fervour of a generous and invincible benevolence. Such is the true nature of christianity! Such is the character, which the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles are at once intended and calculated to produce!—As this is the evident tendency and design of the whole New Testament, so especially of this Epistle of Peter. It was written at a time when the disciples of Christ were exposed to dreadful persecutions and sufferings, and was

directed not to the christians of any particular country, but to those scattered through divers provinces; and its design was manifestly to induce them to maintain a conversation, not merely inoffensive to all men, but in all respects praiseworthy and edifying; and to receive every injury in a spirit of patience, meekness, and long-suffering, and to return blessing for cursing, and good for evil. (See ch. ii. 11—25; iv. 1—5; 12—17; and especially, iii. 8—22.)—In several of these passages, and especially in this last, while the Apostle has primarily another end in view, viz., supporting the christian converts under their sufferings, and directing them in what spirit to suffer, he by the way furnishes us with a complete system of christian doctrine. Thus (ch. ii. 24,) “who his own self bare our sins, &c. that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness,” and in my text, “Christ hath once suffered,” &c.—

From these words I shall be called to consider several points of great importance, continually treated of in Holy Scripture, and which have always made an important part of the creeds, confessions of faith, and articles of religion of every true Church of Christ. Nay, for the special commemoration of which, days or seasons of the year have been set apart.—Consider we,

I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

What hath he suffered?—*Poverty*. (2 Cor. viii. 9.) His parents were poor labouring people, unable to procure better lodgings for Mary, when about to travail, than a stable. He wrought at the trade of a carpenter, and supported himself by manual labour, till he entered on his public ministry; after which he was supported by the charity of his friends. He never possessed

any property on earth. (Matt. viii. 25.) His end in this might be threefold. Knowing that the generality of mankind are poor, and that his followers in general would be such, he meant to sanctify a state of poverty, and to show with what patience and meekness it ought to be suffered. He meant by his poverty to pour contempt on earthly wealth and grandeur. For though he had the choice of any condition in life, he preferred that of poverty. He was to redeem us by suffering hardships of all kinds, and this was one.—*Reproach.* Isaiah had foretold that he “should grow up as a tender plant,” &c. (ch. liii. 2, 3,) and the prediction was fully accomplished. He was respected indeed by twelve fishermen, till one of them turned a traitor, and by a few poor women from Galilee, a low and unpolished district: but by the bulk of the people, and especially by the rich and great and learned, by those in authority, and those accounted religious, he was despised and reproached; deemed “a sinner,” “a blasphemer,” (Matt. xxvi. 65,) “an impostor,” “lunatic,” “possessed of a devil.” “They shot out their arrows, even bitter words.” (Ps. xxii. 6—8, 12, 13, 16.) This prediction was accomplished. (Matt. xxvi. 61.) He was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, forsaken by all. Barabbas, a robber and murderer, was preferred to him. (Matt. xxvii. 20, 21.) His crucifixion was demanded and clamoured for again and again. (Matt. xxvii. 22; Luke xxii. 23.) The shedding of his blood was gloried in. (Matt. xxvii. 25.) He was set at nought by Herod and his men of war, (Luke xxiii. 11,) scourged as a slave, and delivered to the soldiers to be mocked and insulted. (Matt. xxvii. 27—31, 34, 38—44; Luke xxiii. 36, 37.)—*Anguish and distress of soul*, termed an “agony.”

'This was foretold by Isaiah, (ch. liii. 3—7,) and actually experienced: (Matt. xxvi. 36—44; Luke xxii. 43, 44:)—(*αγων*), a conflict in his breast between amazement, consternation, dread, a horror, on the one hand; and a desire to glorify God and save mankind, love to God and man, zeal, resolution, and obedience, on the other. His sorrow was “even unto death.”—The effect; an amazing sweat, though in a cold night, on the dewy ground, profuse, great drops mixed with blood.—The causes; a sight of God’s holiness, justice, and man’s sins; a sight and sense of divine wrath for sin; (John viii. 11;) fear of death and its pangs; the powers of darkness, pains of hell, “a wounded spirit.”—As to his conduct in this agony, he kneeled, lay prostrate, prayed, (*ἐκτενέσκειν*) more vehemently and intensely, (see Jonah iii. 8; where the LXX use this word for *in strength*;)—“with strong cries and tears,” he deprecates the cup, yet submits, and is resigned.—An angel “strengthens him.”—*Pain of body.* Witness the scourge, the thorns,—the nails,—the weight of his body hanging so long upon them. What part of his body was free from pain? His back? No: the scourges make long furrows there? His head? No: the thorns pierce his sacred temples, &c.—*Death.* (2 Cor. v. 14; Heb. ii. 9.) It was *ignominious*, that of a slave:—*lingering*, according to St. Mark, who seems most particular. He was crucified at the third hour, or at nine o’clock; (Mark xv. 25;) at the sixth hour, or at twelve, darkness was over all the land until the ninth; when Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani,” and then again “cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost.” His death must also have been dreadfully *painful*. All nature sympathized; the earth quaked, the

rocks rent, the graves were opened, the vail of the temple was rent asunder. *An accursed death*; “hanging on a tree.” (Gal. iii. 13.) He had given up glory in heaven, honour on earth, riches, rest, liberty, his face to the smiter, his back to the scourge, his hands and feet to the nails, his soul to anguish. Now he gives his life.—Observe

When? “*Once*,” not only when scourged, &c. but through his whole life, from the womb, even to the tomb: but then it was finished. It was not requisite he should suffer more, for by his “one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. x. 14.)—We inquire,

II. THE CAUSE OF THESE SUFFERINGS; “FOR SINS.”

Sin is the cause of all the sufferings in the world, of anguish of mind, affliction and pain of body, in individuals, in families; of the destruction of towns, cities, countries, by inundations, earthquakes, famines, pestilence, war.—It destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, &c. It drowned one world, and will burn another. It cast even angels out of heaven into chains of darkness. It hath done more: it hath betrayed and murdered the Son of God. (Acts ii. 23.) Here especially we see its venom and mischief. Thus we see its infinite evil.—It is one chief end of his death to show that evil, God’s purity in hating, his justice in condemning, his wrath in punishing it, and the dreadful consequence of dying in it.—It was another end to atone for sins, and put them away, so that it might be consistent with the divine attributes, especially his justice, his law, and his government, to pardon the penitent, (Rom. iii. 23, 24.)—Observe,

But for whom did he suffer? “The *unjust*,” for sinners of all sorts, of all nations, ages, sexes, and degrees. “The just for the unjust.”—He *did* no sin, *knew* no sin, was “*holy*, harmless, and undefiled.” He died the innocent for the guilty,—the friend of God for the enemy.—the loyal subject for the contumacious rebel,—the dutiful son for the disobedient slave,—the king for the subject in arms against him,—the just judge for the condemned criminal, the holy Creator for the unholy creature. — —

III. THE END AND DESIGN OF ALL THIS.

“To bring us to God,” from whom we were alienated, from whom we had gone astray, and to whom we were enemies.—To bring us to the *true knowledge of God*. This we had lost by the fall. (Eph. iv. 18; 1 Cor. ii. 11, 14; Rom. iii. 11.) We had especially lost the knowledge of his holiness, justice, and mercy. These are most eminently displayed, only in the work of redemption. Hence God is said to be “manifest in the flesh,” and we “behold with open face in this glass the glory of the Lord.”—To the *fear of God*. This was also lost by the fall, (Rom. iii. 18,) viz., a fear of reverence, awfulness, and a filial fear of offending. The display made in our redemption by Christ’s sufferings of the evil of sin, of God’s hatred to it, and determination to punish it, is particularly calculated to beget this fear.—To the *love of God*. This we had especially lost. (Col. i. 21; Rom. v. 10; viii. 5—9, compared with John iii. 6.) We had forsaken the fountain of living water; our affections had gone after the creature, &c. God is manifested as perfect and amiable, and worthy of our highest esteem, by the works of creation; as bountiful, and worthy of

gratitude in the dispensations of providence; but his marvellous love, so calculated to beget in us love in return, is only displayed in our redemption. (John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 8—10; Tit. iii. 4; Rom. v. 6, &c.) Therefore, (Rom. v. 5,) it is “shed abroad,” &c. (1 John iv. 19.)—To the *favour and friendship* of God. By nature we are children of wrath, (Eph. ii. 1,) ungodly, unrighteous, sinners, and under the wrath of God. (Rom. i. 18.) The sufferings of Christ reconcile God and man, (Rom. v. 9, 10; 2 Cor. v. 18; Eph. ii. 11—19; Heb. ii. 17,) and bring them together. When we have an interest in him we are “justified and have peace with God.” (Rom. v. 1; and viii. 1.)—To the *image and likeness* of God. This we had lost. (Eph. iv. 18; Gen. vi. 5; and viii. 21; Jer. xvii. 9; Matt. xv. 19.) Hence we must be born again. (John iii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 17.) To restore us to this was one great end of Christ’s sufferings and death. (Tit. ii. 14; iii. 5; Eph. v. 25—27; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Rom. vi. 3—11; Gal. vi. 14.) His sufferings and death not only show the reasonableness of dying to sin, crucifying the flesh, &c., but also seal that doctrine which is the great instrument of it, (Jam. i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 22, 23; John xvii. 17,) and procure the Spirit which imparts it. Unless we be restored to this, we do not learn Christ aright. (Eph. iv. 22—24.) Christ made himself like us, that he might make us like himself.—To *communion* with God. This is also lost by the fall. Man was driven out of Paradise. The Word made flesh opens again this intercourse; for having expiated sin by his sufferings, he has introduced us into God’s favour, and obtained for us his Spirit, that we may again have fellowship with him. (Eph. ii. 19—22; Ps. xlvi. 18.) Hence Christ prayed on the ground of his death and

sufferings, (John xvii. 21;) and hence God's promises on the same ground, (2 Cor. vi. 16.)—To the *kingdom and glory* of God. He died that he might abolish death, (Heb. ii. 14,) and bring his people to an immortal life; through sufferings to glory. (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, 20—28; 1 Thess. v. 9, 10; 2 Tim. ii. 10—12; Rom. viii. 17, 32; and especially Heb. ii. 9. 10.) “Creatures die,” said one, “that our bodies may live. Christ died that our souls may live,” and that for ever. — —

INFERENCES.

We learn from this, the vast, the infinite importance of being brought to God, whether we consider the glory of God or our own happiness, in this world and for ever. —The great love of Christ to a lost and ruined world, and of God the Father. (2 Cor. viii. 9; Rom. v. 6—10.) —The great guilt of those who, notwithstanding what Christ hath suffered, will not be brought to God; their ingratitude, their disobedience, their obstinacy, their folly.—The dreadful end of such in a future and eternal state. Sinners! make not light of sin. “If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” Make not light of death, wrath, and hell. Despise not Christ's sufferings. (Lam. i. 12.) Hark! to the voice of his agony, sweat, blood! Abel's blood cries for vengeance as man's blood. This Divine blood cries for pardon. (Heb. ii. 3; x. 26—31; xii. 25.)—This subject affords encouragement to seekers, and comfort to believers.—It points out the state of backsliders, who crucify him, and make him suffer afresh. — —

[Should it be thought proper to include the last clause of the verse whence the text is taken, an additional general division might be made; as

THE PROVISION GOD HATH MADE FOR THE ACCOMPLISHING OF THIS DESIGN IN THE RESURRECTION AND EXALTATION OF HIS SON.

“Quickened by the Spirit,” &c. (Explain briefly to the end of the chapter.)

Christ being raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God, he is qualified to be the great Shepherd of the sheep; (Heb. xiii. 20;) to seek the lost, and bring them back to God, (1 Pet. ii. 25,) and preserve the found. (1 Pet. v. 2—4.)—He is hereby become the universal Prophet and Teacher of his church; not confining his ministry as formerly, to one corner of the earth, but “a light to enlighten the Gentiles;” the “light of men,” yea “of the world;” in consequence of sitting at the Father’s right hand, “sending the rod of his strength out of Zion,” &c. (Ps. cx. 1, 2;) commanding his Gospel to be preached, and actually sending it “to every creature;” coming from the dead, and by his Word and Spirit, “preaching peace to those that are afar off, and to those that are nigh,” and hence bringing men to that knowledge, fear, and love of God above-mentioned: thus the “people become willing in the day of his power,” &c. (Ps. cx. 3.)—In consequence of his resurrection and exaltation, he is become “a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” (Ps. cx. 4.) Like the Jewish high-priest, who on the great day of atonement, entered into the holiest; passing through the visible heavens, (Heb. iv. 14,) into the presence of God, to appear for us as our intercessor and advocate. (Heb. ix. 11, 12.) Exalted (Acts v. 31) a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance, and reconciling us to God by his death, and bringing us into favour and friendship

with him as above; pleading our cause, and keeping us in his favour, and receiving “gifts for us,” especially the Holy Spirit, (Ps. lxxiii. 18; Acts ii. 33,) to bring us as above-mentioned, to God’s image, and to a state of communion with him.—Hereby he is become our King—exalted above all our enemies; men, angels, sin, and death; (Eph. i. 20—23; Phil. ii. 9—11; 1 Pet. iii. 22; Ps. cx. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25;) hence full and final deliverance from them, and also preservation:—at the head of all men and angels for our benefit; giving apostles, evangelists, &c. (Eph. iv. 11,) to teach, reclaim, direct, warn, and watch over his people; (Acts xx. 28: 1 Pet. v. 2;) making angels minister to us, and all things work for our good: thus leading us forward to the presence and enjoyment of God:—as our fore-runner, preparing for us and bestowing upon us eternal life.]

CCLV

EXHORTATION IN THE VIEW OF THE END OF THINGS APPROACHING.

1 PETER iv. 7

*The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober,
and watch unto prayer.*

OF all the sacred subjects that can be brought under our consideration, those that lead our thoughts to dwell on the shortness and uncertainty of life, the certainty and nearness of death, the solemnity of the future judgment, and the awfulness of eternity, are among the most profitable. They tend to awaken our minds, by nature asleep, nay, dead in sin, to rouse them from

their lethargy, and to produce seriousness, thoughtfulness, and activity about our greatest concerns, our immortal interests. They tend to counteract the pernicious influence of external objects, to rescue our souls from the power of them, and to make us die to all things visible and temporal. Thus they prepare our hearts for receiving the seed of the word, and come in to the aid of that faith which is “the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for;” thereby enabling us to overcome and eradicate “the carnal mind which is death,” and producing a “spiritual mind which is life and peace;” disposing us to seek and “set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God,” which is a principal branch of holiness.—No wonder, then, that the prophets and apostles, and even our Lord himself, should so frequently call our attention to these subjects. See Deut. xxxii. 29; Psal. xc. 12; 1 Cor. vii. 29; 1 John ii. 17; Jam. iv. 13, 14; v. 8, 9; Matt. xxiv. 44; xxv. 13; and to the same purpose St. Peter in our text.—Consider,

I. THE MATTER OF FACT HERE ASSERTED.

“The end of all things is at hand.” The universal expression of the apostle, “*all things*,” is not to be taken without some limitation, as there are certainly many things which will never end, much less end soon; as God, his being and perfections, angels, and other immortal beings, the souls of men both saints and sinners, the bodies of men when raised again, their habitations or places of abode, the felicity of the righteous, the misery of the wicked. But to those to whom St. James wrote, the end of the Jewish state was at hand, both civil and religious, the destruction of Jerusalem,

and the dispersion of the Jewish nation. The most commonly received opinion is, that this epistle was written about the year of our Lord 61, and the 7th of Nero; and in the 12th year of that emperor, and A. D. 66, Cestius the Roman general besieged Jerusalem; and two years after, (A. D. 68,) Vespasian came and encompassed that city with his army. Thus our Lord's predictions (Luke xxi. 31; Matt. xxiv. 34; Mark xiii. 30) were fulfilled.—Nevertheless, as this epistle was addressed, not so much to the converted Jews resident in Judea, as to those scattered through divers countries, (ver. 1,) and as but few of those to whom St. Peter wrote, were particularly concerned in that event, and as our Lord himself said, long after the destruction of Jerusalem, “Behold I come quickly—surely I come quickly,” (Rev. xxii. 7, 20,) we are rather to consider the apostle as speaking of the consummation of all things, of which he treats at large in his second epistle. Our Lord had foretold, that “after the tribulation of those days,” *i. e.* of the destruction and dispersion of the Jewish nation, “the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,” (Matt. xxiv. 29;) “and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” And this he, in the most eminent sense, termed his coming. “The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.” (Matt. xxv. 31.) But, St. Peter saith, “There shall come in the last day scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?” &c. (2 Epis. iii. 3, 4.) The days of the Messiah are “the last days;” and we are now undoubtedly under the seventh trumpet, under which the mystery of God shall be finished, probably under the fifth or sixth vial; (Rev. xvi. 10—13;) under

which our Lord expressly says, "Behold I come as a thief, blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments." (Rev. xvi. 15.) I come to destroy the beast and false prophet, and to spread my Gospel through all nations, preparatory to the end of the world.—At all events, the end of our lives is at hand, even of the youngest, for our days at the longest are but an handbreadth. (Ps. xxxix. 5; xc. 4.) "What is your life? it is even a vapour." Much more may this be said of the middle-aged, and most of all of those in declining years.—The end of our employments, cares, and pursuits.—Of our enjoyments, whether of riches, honours, or pleasures, or of the society of our friends, and relatives.—Of our sufferings, whether of poverty, reproach, or affliction.—Of our connexion and intercourse with this material and visible world through the medium of our senses. These avenues, through which the soul of man goes out to the world, and the world comes in to the soul, will soon be shut, finally shut.—Of our opportunities and means of improvement for eternity, and of our whole time of probation.— —

II. THE EXHORTATION GROUNDED THEREON.

"Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer." (*σωφρονεσατε*;) literally, *be wise* or *prudent*.—Was the end of the Jewish state at hand, and did it speedily come, as predicted by our Lord? then let us mark the accomplishment of prophecy, and let our faith be confirmed in the truth of scripture. Let us observe with seriousness and awe, how God overturns kingdoms, however well they may appear to be established and defended, that persecute his truth, or servants, or that reject or even neglect his gospel. What a scene has

been opened before us of late!* and what awful things shall yet be witnessed before the antichristian powers be all destroyed, and the scene be closed!—Is the end of the world, and the destruction of all things approaching? then let us be wise, and take care that we have not our treasure and our heart on earth which is to be destroyed; but let us rise above it, and lay hold on, and transmit our treasure and our heart to another and better world.—Is the end of our lives at hand? then let us consider how far the end of our birth and existence in this world, has been answered, what is that end? what work proper for life remains to be done? are we prepared for death?—Is the end of our temporal employments, cares, and pursuits, at hand?—then let us pursue them with moderation, in the fear of God, and to his glory.—Is the end of our enjoyments at hand? then let us not idolize them, but keep our affections disengaged from earthly things, and seek our happiness in more durable and substantial blessings: let us leave the “broken cisterns,” and have recourse to “the fountain of living waters.”—Is the end of our sufferings at hand? then let us bear them with patience and resignation; especially considering that they are the chastisements of a kind father, trials of our grace, and purifying fires, and shall assuredly work for good.—Is the end of our entire connexion with this material world, by means of our senses at hand? then let us already begin to shut our eyes upon the false glory of it, stop our ears to its flattering invitations, mortify our taste for its gratifications, and desire and look to have other, even spiritual senses, opened in our souls; to have, and

* Referring to the troubles on the continent of Europe a few years back.

live by, that faith which is the evidence of things not seen.—Are our opportunities for improvement soon to end? our use of the means of grace, as hearing, reading, praying, &c.? then let us use them to the best advantage while we have them, and be zealous and diligent to gain knowledge and grace, and that “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”—Is our time of trial soon to end? then let us live under a deep and constant sense of this, and, while life and death, blessing and cursing, are set before us, let us choose life and the blessing, and make our calling and election sure.—Are these things which never end? then let us especially attend to these: for what is time, and what are things temporal, to those which are strictly and properly eternal! — —

The original word also means, *sober* and *temperate*, viz., in the use of all God’s creatures. And in this view the exhortation is according to the advice of our Lord, when speaking with reference to these very things, Luke xxi. 34, and of St. Paul 1 Thess. v. 6—8, and of St. Peter in this epistle. (Ver. 8.) Consider the vast importance of this. — —

With this sobriety both our Lord and all his apostles join *watchfulness*. Thus St. Peter, in my text; “watch unto prayer.” In order to this, we must awake out of sleep, that state of spiritual sleep, or death rather, in which we are by nature, in which our spiritual senses are all locked up, and we are insensible of spiritual things; a state of sloth, of indulgence, of dreaming.—We must awake to a deep sense of the reality, nature, and importance of the things connected with our spiritual and eternal welfare:—to a sense of the danger we are in from our spiritual enemies, and must

watch and be on our guard against their designs, their subtility, and power:—to a sense of the certainty, &c. of our Lord's coming, of the uncertainty of the time when he will come, and be looking and watching for him, whether he come by death or otherwise:—to a sense of the duties which are to be fulfilled by us, and catch the opportunities as they occur:—to a sense of our need of the answer of our prayers, as to what we ask from time to time, and look for an answer.—This leads to "prayer." Gr. *prayers*; excited by, and attended with a sense of our want of spiritual blessings, a view of Christ's fulness, a desire of these blessings sincere, fervent, increasing, importunate, constant, restless; with confidence and expectation of receiving them; mental prayer, vocal, private, social, domestic, public. — —

CCXLVI.

JUDGMENT BEGINNING AT THE HOUSE OF GOD.

1 PETER iv. 17.

The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?

"PREPARE ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," saith Jehovah to the ministers of his word. A very principal part of their duty is to endeavour to remove obstructions from the way of those who would travel to Zion, and to make plain paths for their feet, that they may neither be deterred from beginning, nor

prevented from persevering to walk in the way of religion. Now among many other hinderances of a smaller nature, in the way of those who judge of things by appearance, the two principal ones are the weakness and misconduct of some who take upon them a christian profession, and the poor, afflicted, and apparently mean situation of the generality of God's people. It is true, these things ought not to be an impediment to any, nor are they such to those who are savingly enlightened, and "savour the things of God rather than those that be of men." But they are evidently hinderances to many, and therefore it is our duty to remove them; or, at least, to show how they may be surmounted, if not turned into helps. Hence, having some time ago, when discoursing on Matt. xviii. 7,* endeavoured to remove the former of these hinderances, and to show that the weakness and misconduct of some professors of religion is not a sufficient reason why we should disregard true religion; permit me now to attempt to place the poor, persecuted, and afflicted state of God's people in a true point of view, that this may not be longer a stumbling-block in the way of any of you, or a means of prejudicing you against true and genuine christianity. In order to this, it will be sufficient to explain the text in connexion with the context. (See ver. 12—17)—Consider.

I. WHAT IS MEANT HERE BY "THE HOUSE OF GOD."

The "house of God," is a figurative expression, put here and elsewhere for the church of God. (1 Tim. iii. 15.) This is built on the foundation laid in Zion, not

*See Plan 71, vol. iii. page 5.

of dead, but lively or living stones. (1 Pet. ii. 4—7; Eph. ii. 19—22.) In this last passage, we see why the church of God is called his *house*. It is his tabernacle or temple, and he dwells in it, and makes it “an habitation of himself through the Spirit. (Ps. xlv. 4, 5.)—This includes the visible church of God on earth in general, which is related to God, placed under his eye, and favoured with his presence and protection, as the rest of the world is not; is inspected, visited, governed by him, and attended to as the rest of mankind are not: and the spiritual part of his visible church, which is more particularly his house, his own family. (Heb. iii. 2—6.)—This, in allusion to a human family, may be considered as including both servants and children: servants. persons awakened, convinced of sin, endeavouring to serve God, even to obey him, (Rom. vi. 16.) and to promote his interest, but acting from a fear of punishment, or hope of a reward. This is a state of bondage, one in which we should not be content to remain; (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 4—7;) for we read, (Gal. iv. 30,) “cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman;” and, (John viii. 35,) “The servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the son abideth ever.” Such must proceed to the dignity of children. (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; John i. 12.) Consider the difference of this state from the former. These are pardoned, accepted, adopted, regenerated, peculiarly beloved, have access with confidence and boldness, are heirs of all the Father hath, love, and hope, and serve him from these principles.—They may be in different states; (1 John ii. 12—14;) as babes, “whose sins are forgiven;” young men, who “are strong;” fathers, who have deep experience,

wisdom, paternal affection, care for others, and, if less extatic joy than young converts, yet greater intimacy with the Lord. This may be illustrated by the state of marriage, as the union between a man and his wife is nearer than that between parents and children. (1 Cor. vi. 17; John xiv. 17; xvii. 21.) “Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee.” (Isai. lxii. 4.)—

II. IN WHAT SENSE JUDGMENT BEGINS THERE.

Judgment begins at the house of God; for when God is about to punish mankind for their sins, he begins at the visible church, viz., with those whose privileges are greatest, and who are therefore the most inexcusable. See Rom. ii. 9. (Ezek. ix. 6.) In punishing mankind formerly, he began with the Israelites; (Amos iii. 1, 2;) in punishing mankind now, he begins, not with heathens, or Mohammedans, but professing christians. (See Rev viii., xvi., &c.)—But St. Peter speaks here not of nominal, but of real christians, of such as truly obey the Gospel, and are really the family of God. These, like the rest of mankind, are born in sin, and by nature corrupt. Hence they must suffer as well as others, and their sufferings are intended to correct and purge away their spiritual corruption. In their unconverted state, perhaps, they had committed certain particular and great sins; these, although forgiven as to the spirit, must be punished in the flesh, or at least they must be chastised for them, perhaps even till death, in many ways. We might instance, in the effects of drunkenness, lewdness, dishonesty, rebellion; punished by the just judgment of God in sickness, poverty, disgrace, upon the sinners themselves and their families. Since

their conversion, they have not been free, at least, from failings and infirmities, and are chargeable with various follies, neglects, and faults. These are noticed, condemned, chastised, and that, perhaps, with exactness, and severity, more than the faults of others. A parent pays that attention to the behaviour of his own children, which he does not to the behaviour of others, and chastises their faults when he passes by the faults of others.—With respect to all these three particulars, their original depravity, their actual sins before their conversion, and their failings since; they may suffer immediately from the hand of God, as by affliction of body, losses, &c.; immediately from the hand of man, and remotely from that of God, as by reproaches, persecutions, imprisonment, death: in common with the wicked in all the general calamities brought on a city or nation, as by war, famine, scarcity or dearness of bread, pestilence, &c. Augustine* shows that the righteous suffer along with the wicked in calamities of this kind, because through their inordinate love of the present life, which makes them fear the wicked, and wish to be in their favour, they neglect to testify against their sins. This is an important and just observation.—Let it be observed further here, that these sufferings are punishments of sin, for they could not have suffered any of them, if they had not been sinners; they are also the chastisements of a kind Father, as they are represented, Heb. xii. 9, 10; they are trials and exercises of their grace;† (1 Pet. i. 6, 7; ch. iv. 12; Jam. i. 2, 4:) they

* De civ. Dei. Lib. cap. 9.

† "The good," says Augustine, "have another reason why they should be afflicted with temporal evils, viz., the same that Job had, that the human mind may be proved to itself, and it may be

are purifying furnaces; (Isai. iv. 3, 4; xxvii. 9; Zech. xiii. 9;) they are all the hell they shall ever have, and will heighten their reward in heaven. —

III. WHAT IS IT TO OBEY THE GOSPEL, AND WHO ARE THEY THAT DISOBEY IT.

The Gospel is that system of doctrines, precepts, promises and threatenings, which is revealed in the New Testament, as taught and declared by Christ, and his Apostles. (Rom. i. 1, 9, 16; 1 Thess. i. 5.) To believe in this sense is to be persuaded of, and to lay to heart, these doctrines, to obey these precepts, embrace these promises, revere and stand in awe of these threatenings.—It is glad tidings of great joy, exactly suited to our state. (Luke ii. 10; Isai. lii. 7.) We are in a state of darkness, ignorance, and folly, (Eph. iv. 18; v. 8; Tit. iii. 3; Rom. iii. 11,) as to things spiritual and divine, (1 Cor. ii. 11, 14;) and it brings tidings of an infallible Teacher, and of divine light. (Isai. xlii. 6; Acts xxvi. 18.) We are guilty, and exposed to wrath, (Rom. iii. 12—23; Eph. ii. 1, 2,) and it informs us of an atoning and interceding Priest, and of justification and reconciliation through him. (Rom. iii. 24; 2 Cor. v. 18.) We are captives, and enslaved to Satan, sin, and death, (Eph. ii. 1; Tit. iii. 3,) and it brings tidings of a Deliverer, and of deliverance from these enemies. (Isai. lxi. 1; Acts xxvi. 18.)

To be more particular. Observe the ends which the Gospel has in view, and how it is calculated to answer

known with what degree of piety it loves God. Which things being rightly weighed and understood, it will easily be observed that nothing of evil, nothing but what will work for good, as the Apostle has observed, ever happens to the faithful."

these ends. It finds us in darkness as to ourselves, to God, &c., without light and organs of vision: its end is our illumination in the knowledge of ourselves, &c., by the Word and Spirit of God, giving both light and eyes to see. It finds us guilty, and designs our justification; to answer which ends it offers the mercy of God, the blood and righteousness of Christ, the declarations and promises of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit to work faith, and seal forgiveness on the heart. It finds us born in sin and unholy: it proposes our regeneration and sanctification; and to effect this, it provides the Spirit of God, his word, and various afflictions. It finds us inactive, indolent, and barren, but proposes the enriching us with all good works; and to produce these, it gives commands, exhortations, promises, threatenings, &c., and especially provides for our loving God, and our neighbour, which is a spring of universal obedience, and of all good works. It finds us frail, mortal, dying creatures, but proposes to support and comfort us here, and bring us to eternal life hereafter; and to this end, it reveals the resurrection and ascension of Christ as an earnest of ours, his supreme dominion over all things for our good, his direction and help; it alarms our fears with threatenings of misery, excites our hope with promises of happiness, draws our love by the most attractive representations of the goodness, love, and faithfulness of God. — —

The means and conditions on our part are, repentance, faith, hearing, reading, meditating upon the word, and laying it to heart; praying for and receiving the Spirit, following his drawings, living and walking in him; watchfulness, self-denial, and taking up the cross; zeal and diligence, enduring to the end. These

things are all implied in "obeying the Gospel."—Thus, it is easy to see who do not obey it. Antinomians, who continue in sin; such do not take the first step, do not repent. Self-righteous persons, (Rom. x. 3,) such trust in, and "go about to establish their own righteousness," and do not take the second step, do not believe in or "submit to the righteousness of God;" hence they are not justified. Formalists, dead, and lukewarm professors; such are not regenerated nor created anew. The slothful; such do not bring forth good works. Those who "draw back," and backslide; such not enduring to the end, are not glorified. — —

IV WHAT THEIR END SHALL BE.

Observe. They are not laid under any necessity of disobeying, either by any decree of God, or their own depravity and weakness; otherwise they could not be justly punished. They have every help and advantage from the mercy of God, the mediation of Christ, God's Spirit, word, ordinances, and people. Hence it is their duty; it is also their interest in both worlds; therefore, in disobeying, they are inexcusable. Their ruin and misery are unavoidable, as the consequence of their sinning against, and rejecting the remedy, the salvation offered; from the remunerative justice of God: (2 Thes. i. 5—9; Heb. ii. 3; xii. 25:) the greatness of it is inferred from the present sufferings of the saints. (See the context, and Isai. ix. 12; Jer. xxv. 29; xlix. 12; Ezek. ix. 6; Mal. iii. 5; Luke xxiii. 31.) If the green and fruitful tree must be pruned, what shall be done with the withered branches? and, if the children must be chastised, what shall be done with the enemies and rebels? (Heb. x. 26—31.) — —

CCXLVII.

THE RIGHTEOUS ARE ONLY SAVED WITH
DIFFICULTY.

1 PETER iv. 18.

If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

ALTHOUGH one end of preaching the Gospel is undoubtedly to comfort and encourage the people of God, (Isai. xl. 1,) yet its principal design, with regard to the bulk of those who hear it, is to enlighten, awaken, quicken, and regenerate them. The true people of God make but a small part of most congregations, and even many of these are still ignorant in many things of importance, and need instruction; or are lukewarm, and need quickening; and, as to the rest, those that are not the people of God, they are still more or less in darkness and in death, and cannot be profited any further than light and life is communicated to them. It is true, there are many things, even in religion, concerning which a congregation might remain ignorant and unconcerned, and no materially bad consequences would follow from that ignorance and inattention. But the case is different with regard to such subjects as are offered to our consideration in my text; subjects which enter into the very essence of christianity, and which are absolutely necessary to be known and deeply regarded, in order to salvation. The nature and importance of evangelical righteousness, the difficulty of attaining and retaining it, and the consequence of living and dying without it; these are matters of the deep-

est moment, and such as all should thoroughly understand and lay to heart; and yet these matters are but too generally misunderstood and disregarded. I trust many of my present hearers both understand and consider these things, and are in a degree, at least, duly influenced by them; but is this a general case? I fear it is not; many, I fear, even amongst you, are still unacquainted with them, and not concerned as you ought to be about them, and have need to have them set before you in that true and important point of view in which they are presented to our consideration in the oracles of God, in order to your obtaining the knowledge, experience, and practice of that righteousness on earth, without which you cannot be admitted into heaven. With a view, therefore, to three things; to the instructing of those that are ignorant, the quickening of such as are lukewarm and indolent, and the convincing and alarming of such as are careless and asleep in sin, I propose to consider,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING "RIGHTEOUS."

Righteousness, when distinguished from godliness, or holiness, (Tit. ii. 12; Luke i. 75,) means merely the duty we owe to our neighbour, viz: truth, justice, mercy, charity, or perhaps only one branch thereof, viz: justice or honesty. It more frequently includes our duty to God, and ourselves also, or a conformity in heart and life, in temper, word, and work, to the nature, will, and law of God. This is righteousness according to the covenant of works. (Rom. x. 5.) Thus Adam was righteous before the fall: thus none have been righteous since; (Rom. iii. 9—20; Gal. ii. 16; iii. 10;) but on the other hand, sinful and guilty. Right-

eousness, therefore, in scripture is generally to be understood in a different sense, as a conformity to, or an acceptance of the law of liberty, or covenant of grace, in which sense many have been righteous in all ages. (Gen. vii. 1; xviii. 23; Numb. xxiii. 10; Isai. iii. 10; Mal. iii. 18; Luke i. 6; 1 John iii. 7.)—This righteousness is not natural to us, but the supernatural gift of God. (Eph. ii. 1—6; Rom. v. 16.) All are concluded under sin, (Gal. iii. 82,) and unbelief; (Rom. xi. 32;) and therefore under guilt, condemnation, and wrath. **T**his being the foundation of our righteousness, it consists in the following particulars:—The imputation of righteousness, or justification, implying pardon and acceptance with God. This is granted only in consideration of what Christ hath done and suffered, and to those that believe. (Rom. iii. 23—28; x. 10.) These texts afford us light respecting the doctrine of imputed righteousness: the pardon, or non-imputation of sin, is imputed righteousness. (Rom. iv. 6—8.) — As this is only granted for Christ's sake, he is our righteousness. (1 John ii. 2; 2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. iii. 25; x. 4.) As it is only conferred upon believers, (Phil. iii. 9; Gal. ii. 16,) faith may be, and is said to be imputed for righteousness. (Rom. iv. 2—5, 22.) This, according to the covenant of grace, is the righteousness required and accepted, instead of that perfect obedience required under the covenant of works, in order to our justification. Regeneration and sanctification, or righteousness implanted: (Rom. vi. 18; Eph. iv. 24; Rom. viii. 4:) this is necessary, as removing our sinfulness, and making us like God, that we may be fitted for heaven. — Practical obedience. (Luke i. 6; 1 John iii. 7.)—

II. IN WHAT SENSE THE RIGHTEOUS ARE "SCARCELY SAVED."

Salvation is present as well as eternal; including salvation from sin here, as well as from its consequences hereafter, (Eph. ii. 8, 9; 2 Tim. i. 9,) into the favour and image of God while on earth, as well as into his kingdom and glory hereafter; or, it implies the being made righteous. It is not improper to understand it thus. The righteous are saved, or made righteous, "scarcely," or *with difficulty*, as the Greek word generally means.

They are with difficulty saved from the guilt of sin, into the favour of God. Not because God is wanting in mercy, or unwilling to pardon and accept sinners, but, according to the appointed method of salvation, he cannot do this till sinners repent and believe; that is, till they know and confess their guilt and desert of condemnation; till they are humbled and sorry for, and renounce their sins, as well as their own righteousness, and submit to the righteousness of God. This our evil nature opposes,—as our ignorance, our pride, our self-confidence, our sinful desires, our unbelief; also the devil and the world, the persons in it, and things of it; sinners are hardly brought to pray with the publican. (Luke xviii. 13; Heb. iv. 11.) In a sense, its easiness makes it difficult. (2 Kings v. 12—13.)—It is with difficulty they are regenerated and sanctified. Not that God is unwilling to give his sanctifying spirit, but he gives it only to those who ask for it earnestly, importunately, with faith, and an obedient mind; who watch, and through its aid, mortify the deeds of the body, (Rom. viii. 13,) deny themselves, take up their

cross, renounce the world, “pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand, &c. Hence strife, agony, violence is necessary. And because few are willing to comply in these respects, few enter in; for “strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life.” Satan tempts, the flesh pleads, and the world allures or frowns, and all persuade us that we need not “strive to enter in.”—Righteousness is practised with difficulty. It includes *sobriety*, viz: temperance, chastity, and purity; now, as our appetites, passions, and senses oppose it, this is not preserved without difficulty, not without self-denial, mortification, watchfulness: *righteousness*, viz: truth, justice, mercy, charity; these are not practised without difficulty: *godliness*, or setting God before us; living always in his fear, maintaining his love, viz: purity of intention, and affection, zeal for his glory, obedience to his will. How great the difficulty of all this!—It is with difficulty men hold out to the end. The sheep of Christ are at present in the wilderness, the day is dark and cloudy, wolves and beasts of prey surround them on all sides; many are scattered from the fold of God and from the flock of Christ, and are seized and torn by the wolves, &c. (1 Cor. x. 10; Heb. iii. 7; xii. 19.) A race must be “run with patience” and perseverance, in which, however, many faint and tire, and give up. A battle must be fought, wherein we must conquer, but many fall and are slain. “Many are called and few chosen.” Prayer and watchfulness, labour and diligence, “fear and trembling” are needful. (Heb. vi. 1, 12.) —

Salvation sometimes means eternal life. Now those that hold out to the end are scarcely saved in this sense; saved, and that is all; there are no works of su-

pererogation. There is a difference however, amongst such as persevere. For though no one has any thing to spare, some will pass into heaven with more triumph than others, or will have more glory there. — —

The context inclines us to admit yet another sense of the expression. St. Peter refers to the calamities coming on the Jews, in which the christians participated, in some measure, with their fellow-countrymen. The righteous in all ages are exposed to sufferings as well as the rest of mankind; nay, they have sufferings peculiar to themselves, through the Divine corrections, &c., for “judgment begins at the house of God.” The righteous, therefore, are “scarcely saved,” being not exempted from sufferings, from misery. — —

III. WHO ARE MEANT BY “THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER;” AND WHERE MAY WE INFER FROM THE ABOVE THAT THEY WILL APPEAR?

All that are not “righteous” are here intended. They may be divided into two classes.—“The ungodly,” as distinguished from the “sinner,” means those who “have the form of godliness without the power.” These do not commit open sin, they attend the ordinances of God, and do good to mankind. Notwithstanding this, they have not “the power” of godliness, viz., the true knowledge of God, (John xvii. 3; Eph. i. 17,) the true love of God, (Rom. v. 5,) and neither his favour, his image, nor fellowship with him. (Eph. i. 4—7; iv. 18.) And yet they “trust in themselves that they are righteous,” and, perhaps, “despise others;” (Luke xviii. 9; Isai. lxxv. 5;) but they want the main foundation of all righteousness, self knowledge and self-abasement, contrition, &c., much more living faith, which alone justifies the

ungodly.—The “sinners” are those who live in known, wilful, and open sin, whether of omission or of commission. These not only are not righteous, but they make no pretensions to that character. — —

Where shall such “appear?” I appeal to themselves. Ye ungodly and sinners!—The righteous have been enlightened to know themselves, awakened to see their danger, have renounced their sins, and their own righteousness, pleaded guilty, submitted to the righteousness of God, and yet have with difficulty obtained mercy: What will become of you, who retain and cover your sins, stand up in your own defence, refuse to come to Christ, &c.—The righteous prayed, watched, denied themselves, &c., and after all, were scarcely sanctified: What will become of you, who neglect prayer, and indulge yourselves and your corruptions, &c.? —The righteous, with great care, labour and diligence, practised righteousness, and attended to the motives, the rule, the end and spirit of their whole behaviour: What will be the end of you, who practise sin?—The righteous travelled, run, wrestled, fought, &c., and what is more, received daily supplies of grace from Christ, and yet having done all, were hard put to it to stand, to keep their ground and overcome: What expectations can you have, who do nothing of this?—The righteous are scarcely saved from hell, having nothing to spare: Where then will you appear, ye ungodly and sinners? how can ye escape the damnation of hell? how can ye possess the kingdom of heaven? nay, how can ye entertain any hope of it? — —

Where will you appear?—On a sick bed. But how will you appear there? without confidence in God’s mercy and love, protection and care; without the con-

solation of his Spirit, under the power of evil tempers—On a death-bed. How will you appear there? with a guilty conscience, sins unpardoned, under God's displeasure, with forebodings of misery, despair of mercy?—Before a holy and just God; before whom you will appear in your depravity and guilt, without Christ's righteousness to cover you, or his Spirit to renew you; naked and bare; a mark for the arrows of Divine justice, and fuel for the consuming fire of his wrath.—At the judgment seat of Christ. (2 Cor. v. 10.)

“The loud trump shall call,” &c.*

How will you appear before Him, whose doctrines and revelations you would not believe and lay to heart, whose laws you would not follow, whose salvation you would not receive, &c.? — If you die ungodly, or sinners, you must appear in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, where your punishment will be great and eternal. For if “judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of those that obey not the Gospel?” Read and consider the greatness of your future misery in the greatness of the present affliction of the saints. — —

APPLICATION.

Are you not ungodly?—Nay, are you not sinners? Where shall you appear?—Have you considered, and can you resolve the question? have you counted the cost of your impenitence, and unbelief, and rebellion? dare you abide the consequences? can you dwell with everlasting burnings? You cannot; you need not.—Acknowledge your sinfulness and guilt, forsake sin and

* See Dr. Young's “Last Day.”

your own righteousness, the world, yourselves, &c. and fly to Jesus as your only refuge.—And let there be no delay. “Do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s time.” Pray while God hears; hear while God speaks; believe while God promises; and obey while God commands.—Ye righteous who “know the terrors of the Lord,” and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands, pray for and persuade them. In the mean time take care of yourselves. You are still in danger, in the wilderness not in Canaan; on your journey, not in the city; on the tempestuous sea, not in the haven; in an enemy’s country, surrounded by enemies, not reaping the fruits of victory. Continue righteous; so strive as to enter in; so “run as to obtain;” so fight as to conquer. “Add to your faith virtue, (courage,) and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.” And seeing ye look for such things, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Thus “an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly. (πλουσιως, *richly*,) into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.” (2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 10, 11.)

CCXLVIII.

ST. PETER'S ADDRESS TO THE GOD OF ALL
GRACE ON BEHALF OF BELIEVERS.

1 PETER V. 10.

The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

How much and how justly soever we esteem the narratives, which the four Evangelists have given us of the life and death, the doctrine and miracles, the sufferings and glory of the Lord Jesus, and how carefully soever we ought to peruse them, it appears to me, if we would see christianity delineated in perfection, we should study the writings of the Apostles. Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, kept back many important truths, or spake of them very sparingly, because his disciples could not then bear to have them declared fully. Nor is this observation to be confined to the abolition of the Mosaic law and the destruction of the Jewish city and temple; but even the fall and depravity of man, his redemption by the atoning death and meritorious resurrection of Christ, justification through faith in his blood, and sanctification by his Spirit, were but sparingly revealed until Christ's ascension and glorification, and the great effusion of the Spirit in his gifts and graces to confirm the Gospel, and "guide his servants into all truth." In the epistles, written after that effusion of the Spirit of truth, and after all the christian mysteries were finished, christianity is set before us in all its glory. And of the epistles, no part appears to me

more instructive and profitable, or more calculated to lead us forward in the Divine life, than the solemn addresses to God, either by way of prayer or praise, which we find interspersed in them. Many of these occur in the epistles of Paul, all of which are remarkably edifying. In the two epistles of St. Peter, we have only one of praise, (1 Epis. i. 3,) and this of prayer. But they are both peculiarly encouraging, and full of instruction, especially this which I have now read as the subject of our present meditation.—We have here,

I. THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH THE APOSTLE ADDRESSES GOD.

“The God of all grace.”—In St. Paul’s Epistles we find Jehovah addressed as “the God of peace,” “of patience,” “of hope,” “of consolation;” here, all these, and more, are included in his being termed “the God of all grace.”—Grace means free and undeserved love, or unmerited favour. Such is the love which God bears to any or all of his creatures that are, or ever were, the objects of it; it is free and unmerited, whether manifested in their creation, preservation, or in the subsequent blessings bestowed upon them. Such especially is God’s love or favour to fallen, sinful, guilty man; it is altogether free and unmerited, and is gloriously manifested in his redemption and salvation. This grace of God is the source of all the free and generous emotions of love in the universe, whether in men or angels.—Grace means the influence of God’s Spirit. This is in and from God in all its fulness; every kind of grace; that which enlightens, quickens, pardons, renews, strengthens, comforts; every degree of each kind.—Grace means the effects of this influence on the soul,

or every holy disposition, temper, and habit of the christian character, as the grace of humility, self-denial, faith, love, meekness, &c., whereby we grow into a conformity to Christ, and are made meet for heaven. (2 Pet. iii. 18.) —

“Who hath called us unto *his own* (αὐτοῦ) eternal glory by Christ Jesus;” to *behold it* producing a degree of knowledge, holiness, happiness, perfection of mind and body unspeakable. Observe the face of Moses after he had seen the Divine glory; and the transfiguration of Christ. (Matt. xvii. 2; 1 John iii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 18.) *To possess it.* (Ch. v. 1; John xvii. 22.) It will be our privilege to participate and be filled with it, in a manner of which we have now only a remote idea; to be made, as far as possible, glorious, like God.—“Who hath called us;” invited, urged, pressed our pursuit of his eternal glory; by his word, exhortations, promises, &c.; by his providence, his Spirit.—Nay, “by Christ Jesus;” not only *through* him, his sacrifice and intercession, and *in* him, *i. e.*, in and by union with him, for the glory can be in no other way obtained, but *by* him. He assumed our nature, tabernacled among us, came and spoke familiarly with us, brought us himself the invitation and promise, and delivered them with his own lips, enforced by his miracles, holy life, extreme sufferings, came back from the dead to assure us of the certainty of his promise, to induce us to take it. —

“After that ye have suffered a while.” Sufferings must precede glory. (Ch. ii. 19—23; iii. 14; iv. 12, 13; Rom. viii. 17, 35; 2 Tim. ii. 15.) But it is only *a while* the disciples of Christ are called to suffer, a very short while compared with eternity: their losses and poverty are for a while, their gains and riches for ever;

their shame and reproach for a while, their honor and glory for ever; their sickness and death for a while, their health and life for ever; their tribulation, distress, &c., for a short while, their rest and felicity for ever.

— —

II. THE PETITION ADDRESSED TO HIM.

“Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Inverting the order of the words, and taking the last particular first, which the sense of the several expressions seems to require, according to the usual progress of the work of grace in believers, the meaning of the petition will be,—May he place you firm on your foundation; (θεμελιωσαι;) “on the foundation” of the doctrine “of the Apostles and Prophets.” (Eph. ii. 20.) This is the foundation of the Church, and “the pillar and ground of truth;” (1 Tim. iii. 16;) and it is of vast importance to be fixed as to the principles of our faith, this being the ground and support of all experimental and practical religion:—particularly on Christ, “the foundation laid in Zion;” (Isai. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 11;) as a Teacher, a Mediator, a Saviour, a Governor; the ground of confidence for illumination, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, grace to help in time of need, and of hope for eternal life; the source of love and of every grace, because the giver of the Holy Spirit.—May he strengthen you (σθενωαι) to resist and overcome your enemies, that they may not remove you from your foundation by any “wind of doctrine,” (Eph. iv. 14,) or by any temptation, whether to doubt, or to presume, or to love the world, by the law of the members, or sin, or fear of death; to perform every duty to God, to your neighbour, or yourselves; to endure all sufferings.—In

consequence of this, may he establish you (*στηριξαι*) in his truth and grace, in faith, hope, love, and new obedience, that you may be steadfast and immovable in your adherence to the doctrines, your possession of the graces and privileges, and your performance of the duties of your holy calling. (Rom. ii. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 58.)—And in this way, may he make you perfect, (*καταρτισαι*) or complete christians, lacking nothing, destitute of no grace or virtue, and possessing every one in a mature state, in a state of meetness for “the inheritance of the saints in light.” — —

III. THE GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT WE HAVE TO EXPECT THE ANSWER OF THIS PETITION, AND THE MEANS TO BE USED BY US THAT WE MAY RECEIVE THE ANSWER OF IT.

The most unworthy may expect this from the God of free unmerited love and undeserved favour.—The most sinful, depraved, and weak, from Him in whom is “the fulness of the Spirit.”—The most deficient and imperfect, from Him who is the giver of every grace, and of every degree of grace.—His sincerity, truth, and faithfulness, are here concerned. He hath “called us to his own eternal glory,” and without these things, we can neither have a title to, nor meetness for, that glory. He hath already done more than all this; he hath given us Christ, and that to purchase these blessings, and bring us tidings of them, and press us to come and receive them.

The way, as marked out in the preceding verses, is,—We must humble ourselves; we must cast our care upon him; we must awake and be watchful; we must resist the Devil. — —

CCXLIX.

FUTURE DISSOLUTION OF THE HEAVENS
AND EARTH SHOULD BE IMPROVED AS A
MOTIVE FOR HOLINESS.

2 PETER iii. 11, 12.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

It is generally supposed, and not without reason, among professing christians, that infidels of all descriptions are very unreasonable and inconsistent characters. Whether they be atheists, who disbelieve the being and attributes of God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution; or deists, who do not acknowledge the truth of the Scriptures, and of the important doctrines revealed therein: they are unreasonable, because they resist evidence, and reject proofs, which are little short of demonstration, and require mathematical certainty in subjects which do not admit of it, or demand the continual repetition of miracles formerly wrought, although such a repetition would render them common events, and leave nothing miraculous in them. And they are inconsistent with themselves, for in disbelieving the truth of natural and revealed religion, they of necessity believe many things much more unlikely, and even impossible to be true. For example, while they deny the existence, perfections, and providence of God, they must believe that they themselves, with their curiously framed bodies, and intelligent comprehension, and self-conscious minds, and also this whole universe

of things, in which we every where meet with such evident indications of a designing wisdom, executing power, and superintending goodness, are the productions of chance, that is of nothing, or that they made themselves; that is, that they acted before they existed. In believing that they have no souls or spirits, they must believe that mere matter, dead and inert as it is, has within itself power of self-motion, of perception, and of thought. In disbelieving the immortality of the soul, and a future state, they believe that though we have a consciousness of right and wrong, and feel ourselves to be accountable creatures, yet that we shall never be called to account. In disbelieving the christian revelation, they must believe that a number of persons, of manifest judgment and approved integrity, spent their lives in labours and sufferings, and exposed themselves to all kinds of ill usage, and to certain torture and death, in attesting that to be true, which they knew to be false, viz., that Jesus of Nazareth wrought many miracles, and even rose from the dead, which labours and sufferings, ill usage and death, they might all have avoided, merely by forbearing to bear witness to such a lie. And they believe too, that, though many predictions, contained in these Scriptures, and those manifestly delivered ages before the existence of the events they foretel, have been evidently accomplished, yet that both the predictions, and the events corresponding with them, happened by chance, and without the knowledge, appointment, or superintendency of an all-wise and all-mighty Being; such is the inconsistency of infidels. But, great as their unreasonableness and inconsistency may be, I am much in doubt whether a very great majority of professing christians in the present day, are

not much more unreasonable and inconsistent. For while they profess to believe the infinitely important matters revealed in the Holy Scriptures, concerning God, Christ, and the world to come, concerning death, judgment, and eternity, they daily act as if all these things were utterly false; and while they profess to expect the unspeakably awful events, of the approach of which they are forewarned in this sacred book, they make no preparation for these events; or while they look for such things, as St. Peter speaks of in the context, they give no proper care to maintain a "holy conversation and godliness." This is an awful and distressing consideration, and greatly concerns, as I fear, many of us. May we attend to it, and lay it to heart, ere it be too late. At present let us inquire,

I. WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS WHICH THE APOSTLE AFFIRMS SHALL BE DISSOLVED?

[This must be shown by explaining the context. Ver. 1, *et seq.*)]

* * * * *

II. WHAT INFLUENCE OUGHT THE FORESIGHT AND CONSIDERATION OF THIS EVENT TO HAVE UPON US?

It ought to impress our minds with a deep sense of the great evil of sin, and with a fixed hatred to it. Sin, which is so dreadful an evil, that it brought fire and brimstone from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah, caused the earth to swallow up Dathan and Abiram, &c., brought destruction on cities, as Nineveh, Babylon, &c., on kingdoms and empires, as the Babylonian, Persian, &c., and drowned the whole world; sin so deiled the earth, and brought such a curse upon it, that it

cannot be removed without its entire dissolution and destruction by fire.—It ought to beget in us a high esteem for, and fervent desire after, righteousness, which is so excellent and valuable that God will not place it in this world, but will pull this world down, and build another of better materials for its reception and abode.—It ought to make us serious, watchful, and circumspect. The destruction of a city by a fire, of an island or country by an earthquake, &c., is a serious thing, and should make those serious that foresee or behold it. The foresight of the destruction of Sodom by Abraham or Lot doubtless tended to make them serious. Shall not the foresight of the destruction of the universe make us serious? Beholding the cataract of the Nile filled Bruce* with wonder and astonishment so that he remained for some time insensible to everything else, and motionless as a statue. What then should be the effect on our minds of the prospect of the catastrophe of universal nature?—It should induce us to “come out,” and “keep ourselves unspotted from the world.” God, who formerly brought the flood, about to bring a conflagration “on the world of the ungodly.” If Moses said, “Separate yourselves, and come out from the tents of these wicked men,” when the earth was going to swallow up Corah and his company, how much more may we say, Come out from among those, whom an overwhelming destruction about to sweep into everlasting fire.—It should induce us to behold these temporal things, which are thus to be destroyed, with indifference, and to die to them. Shall we esteem, desire, anxiously care for, or pursue things

* Travels to discover the source of the Nile.

so defiled, so accursed, and to be so destroyed!—It should induce us to esteem, desire, and prepare for that new world, and the things of it, which God will bring out of the ashes of the old.—It should make us bear with fortitude and patience, all the previous and lesser trials which we shall meet with ere this dissolution takes place. The sailors on board his Majesty's ships, who are in expectation of a hot engagement with the enemy's fleet, do not think much of a slight wound or injury they may receive before.—In short, it should induce us to be holy in all manner of conversation.

The word is in the plural; *all conversations*; at home, abroad, in God's house, in our own, with persons of every rank and condition, high and low, young and old, saints and sinners, friends and enemies; as to our actions, words, tempers, desires, thoughts, in soul and body, in all our faculties and members. For as the want of holiness destroyed the old world, and for the sake of holiness a new world is prepared, it ought surely to be the object of our greatest labour and continual pursuit.—So also should we follow after godliness, as the fear of God, &c. Should we not reverence and stand in awe of one so mighty in power, so inflexible in justice, so terrible in his judgments, that for sin he destroys the whole world with a most terrible destruction? Should we not, in our greatest difficulties and dangers, and deaths, trust in God; for what is too hard for Him, who can bring a new and glorious world out of the ashes of the old? what can he not, and what will he not do for his people? Should we not desire and delight in him, and make him our portion who will be the same, an unchangeable and eternal good and source of happiness to his people, when all nature is

destroyed? Should we not devote ourselves entirely to his service, and make him the ultimate end of all our designs and actions, who will be alive to reward our services, and to glorify himself in our salvation, when the heavens and the earth, and all sublunary riches, honours, and joys are no more? — —

III. HOW MAY WE BE ENABLED TO ATTAIN THIS UNIVERSAL GODLINESS AND HOLINESS?

By “looking for the coming of the day of God;” expecting it in firm faith, lively hope, and persevering patience.—By “hastening” to meet it in desire and diligence, arousing ourselves to the performance of every duty, getting “oil in our vessels,” lighting our lamps, taking our “staff in our hand,” by “girding up the loins of our mind,” being “sober, and hoping to the end,” &c. (1 Pet. i. 13.)—By hastening to it by fervent and believing prayer; “Come Lord Jesus;” “thy kingdom come;” and helping forward his kingdom.—By remembering that death will be the end of all things to us on earth, and that it may come to-morrow. — —

CCL.

DIVINE LONG-SUFFERING EXEMPLIFIED, AND ITS ENDS DESCRIBED.

2 PETER iii. 15.

Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.

PERHAPS there is not an attribute of the Divine Being more important to us, in this our sinful and fallen

state, or to which we are continually under greater obligations, than his *long-suffering*. There is not a day, nor an hour, nor a moment, in which the best of us do not need its exercise, and in which we do not owe to it all we have and all we are. In fact, we live upon it, we live by it, and were it not for the long-suffering of God, we should possess no blessing, temporal nor spiritual; nay, we should not continue a moment in existence; or rather, we should be reaping the due reward of our deeds in that place “where the worm dieth not,” and “where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”—One would suppose, therefore, that this divine perfection, to which we are under so many and such constant obligations, would be the matter of our frequent meditation, so as to be well understood, perfectly familiar to our minds, and precious to our souls. But, alas! there is perhaps, in point of fact, hardly a subject of any importance in the whole compass of religion, which so rarely occupies men’s thoughts, or has so little influence on their hearts and lives. Now what can be the reason of this? Is it because this subject is seldom noticed or recommended to our consideration in scripture? By no means. We meet with it in almost every page of these sacred oracles, and it is frequently so enlarged upon, that we have whole chapters upon it, while it is illustrated and enforced by parables, similitudes, metaphors, and examples without end.—What then is the reason that so important, necessary, and useful a subject, and one continually urged upon us in scripture, is not better understood, and more laid to heart! The reason may be, that our natural pride of heart and self-righteousness does not like to attend to and dwell upon so humi-

liating a doctrine, that ascribes *all* to *divine mercy*, and *nothing* to *human merit*; and that although this subject is much spoken of in scripture, yet those passages which treat of it are rarely considered as they ought to be, and very seldom brought forward in the pulpit. I may be permitted, therefore, to solicit your attention to some thoughts which have occurred to me on this very important, although much neglected doctrine of revelation. And I offer them to you on this day,* because I know no subject more proper for our meditation on such an occasion, God having manifestly during the last, and for many past years, exercised great patience towards us, notwithstanding our continued provocations; and having protected and prospered us even beyond our expectations, insomuch that since we met last for the purpose of fasting and prayer, we have been publickly called upon to give thanks for great victories obtained by our arms. Let us therefore now see in what light we are to consider, and what use we are to make of his undeserved kindness to us.—The long-suffering of God, like his mercy and goodness, has in every age of the world and the church been liable to much misinterpretation and abuse. From his forbearance towards them, men have inferred that he was “altogether such an one as themselves,” as little averse to and displeased with sin as they were, or that he could not, or would not, punish it; and however he might fulfil his promises, yet that he would not execute his threatenings. Hence, instead of being “led to repentance,” as St. Paul observes, “by the goodness of God,” “because sentence against their evil works was not

* Appointed by government for general fasting and humiliation.

speedily executed, their hearts have been fully set in them to do evil." There were many of this description in St. Peter's time, and some, it seems, among the professors of christianity. From our Lord's deferring to come to take vengeance, they inferred that he never would come; and thus, "after their hardness and impenitent heart, treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath." With an unbelieving sneer they demanded, "Where is the promise of his coming," &c.? — The apostle's purpose in this passage is to correct their sentiments on this matter, and to teach us all the improvement we ought to make of the divine long-suffering.—"Seeing that ye look for such things," says he, "give diligence, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless:" and "account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation."—But consider we,

I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE LONG-SUFFERING OF OUR LORD, AND HOW IT IS EXERCISED AND MANIFESTED.

Long-suffering is an attribute of God, which in the sacred Scriptures is frequently mentioned in connexion with his mercy, grace, and goodness, to which it is nearly allied. Thus in Exod. xxxiv. 6; Num. xiv. 18; Joel ii. 13. In the last of these passages the long-suffering of God is well explained. It is his "slowness to anger," and "repenting him of the evil," or his unwillingness to punish, and delay of vengeance. It is well explained in a part of the New Version of the 103d Psalm:

“ The Lord abounds with tender love,
And unexampled acts of grace:
His waken'd wrath does slowly move,
His willing mercy flows apace.”

Or in those fine lines of Dr. Watts,

“ Grace rules below, and sits enthron'd above,
How few the sparks of wrath! how slow they move,
And drop and die in boundless seas of love!”

This long-suffering of God has been and is exercised and manifested towards the world in general: in the days of Noah, (1 Pet. iii. 20, comp. with Gen. vi. 3, 5, 7; vii. 4;) in these days. (2 Pet. iii. 7—9.)—Towards particular nations,—as Egypt; in the days of Pharaoh: (Gen. xv. 13, 14; Rom. ix. 22:)—the Canaanites: (Gen. xv. 7, 16:)—the Israelites in the wilderness; (Num. xiv. 1—20, 27; Psalm lxxviii. 7, 8, 10—21, 38, 39; Ezek. xx. 4, 6—9, 13, 14;) in after ages; (Hos. xi. 7—9;) in Christ's time; (Matt. iii. 7—10; Luke xiii. 6—9:)—all the ancient great empires, the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and especially the Roman; it was not till after daring, and long-continued provocations, and its rejection of the Gospel and persecuting God's servants, that he gave it up, first to the Goths, then to the Saracens, and thirdly to the Turks:—our own nation, before the civil war, in the time of Charles I.:—America, before the late war with that country, when visited with the yellow fever and raging fires:—France, especially the old government, and the nobles and clergy, for centuries previous to the revolution:—the Netherlands, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, and its various states:—Ireland, before the present display of divine anger against it.—Towards cities, as Sodom; (Gen. xviii. 20—33;)—Nineveh; (Jonah i. 2;

iii. 10; iv. 11;—Babylon; (Jer. l. li.);—Tyre, Sidon; (Isai. xxiii.; Ezek. xxvi. xxvii. xxviii.);—Jerusalem; (Luke xix. 42;—Rome, before its destruction by the Goths;—Constantinople, before the Turks;—London, before the plague, in 1625, when 35,417 died, and that in 1665, when 68,000 died: and the fire in 1666, when above 13,000 houses were burnt.—Towards churches, that have left their first love, like that of Ephesus: (Rev. ii. 2—6;—that are lukewarm, like that of Laodicea; (Rev. iii. 14—16;—that are formal and dead, like that of Sardis; (Rev. iii. 1—3;—that are contending about trifles, quarrelling and dividing, and in other respects corrupt like those in the East, before they were delivered up to the scourge of the Saracens, predicted Rev. ix. 1—11;—that are idolatrous, ignorant, and wicked, like those in Asia, Greece, and near Constantinople, before they were delivered up to the Turks;—that are immersed in superstition and idolatry, like the churches in the West, before they were scourged by the irruptions of the Goths and Vandals, predicted Rev. viii. 5—13; and the Popish churches in general, before the infliction of that vengeance predicted in Rev. xvi. Dan. vii. 9—12; Rev. xvii. 1, 16, 17; xviii. 19—23.—The Protestant churches, which “hold the truth in unrighteousness;”—the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches on the continent of Europe; the Church of England, many of whose ministers and people are as ignorant of the doctrines of that religion which they profess, as they are disobedient to its precepts, and regardless of its promises and threatenings, and yet are spared through the patience and long-suffering of God. And what shall I say of the Dissenting churches here, whether Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist, or Quaker. Alas! how

much profession, but how little possession of that pure and undefiled religion, which consists in "faith working by love," "love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned," which is, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world."

'This long-suffering is exercised towards families, as that of Ahab of old, the house of Stuart in England, and of Bourbon in France; "living without God in the world," in the constant neglect of his Word and worship, in profaneness, ungodliness, unrighteousness, and intemperance. Yet God defers to cut them off and blot out their names, though he afflicts them severely, reduces them perhaps to poverty; he continues, in many ways, to show them mercy.—Towards individuals—who persecute Christ and his people, as Saul, (Acts vii. 58; viii. 3; ix. 1,) Ardalio, the stage-player;

"Ardalio jeers, and in his comic strains
The mysteries of our bleeding God profanes,
While his loud laughter shakes the painted scenes."
"Grace leaves the skies, and he the stage forsakes,
He bows his head down to the martyring axe," &c.*

who are wilfully ignorant, and neglect the means of instruction;—wilfully wicked, living in open or secret sin, and knowing their Master's will, and not doing it:—false professors, hypocrites, Pharisees, formalists; (Isai. lxxv. 2, 5; l. 10;)—that rest without christian experience and practice, without repentance, without faith, without holiness;—that leave their first love and backslide; (Hos. xi. 7—9; Jer. iii. 12;)—unfruitful and slothful christians; (Matt. iii. 10; Luke xiii. 6; Heb. vi. 7, 8;)—God in his long-suffering, defers to cut them

* See Watts's *Horæ Lyricæ*.

off by death, to withdraw his Spirit entirely from them, to deprive them of means and spiritual privileges, to chastise them severely. — —

II. IN WHAT SENSE WE OUGHT TO ACCOUNT IT SALVATION.

Salvation may be taken here for temporal preservation, in the continued possession of our good things, or for restoration to such blessings as we have lost, or for deliverance from such temporal evils as have fallen upon us.—It might be shown, that God's long-suffering towards the old world and the world at present, towards nations, especially the Israelites, towards cities, churches, families, and even individuals, has in view these ends.—Or spiritual and eternal salvation may be meant—God's long-suffering has especially this end in view: He bears with the world, with nations, with families, &c., that sinners may be saved out of them. See 1 Pet. xiii. 19, 20; 2 Pet. iii. 9; Rev. xvi. 9, 11. For this end he protects and preserves our own nation—God's long-suffering is calculated to answer this end; as it grants space for repentance and amendment, as it strongly persuades and urges to it, and will influence a thinking and feeling mind to attempt it; as it affords every necessary help, not only the waiting mercy of God, the continued mediation of Christ, and the incessant striving of the Holy Spirit, but the call of God's word by his servants. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the old world; (2 Pet. ii. 5;) Lot to the inhabitants of Sodom; (2 Pet. ii. 7;) Joseph and the Israelites, and Moses performing signs and wonders to Egypt; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the Canaanites; Jonah to Nineveh; Daniel, Shadrach, and his companions, to Baby-

lon; Moses and the Prophets to the Israelites, before the Babylonish captivity; John the Baptist, Christ and his Apostles to the Jews, before the last destruction of their city, &c., by the Romans; (Matt. xxi. 33—41: Mark xii. 1—9; Luke xx. 9—18;) the Apostles and primitive christians all over the Roman empire before its destruction; the ancient Fathers of the christian church, and many great lights in the east and west, before the calamities brought upon them by the Goths and Vandals, the Saracens and Turks; the Reformers in France and Germany, Holland, Switzerland, &c., for a testimony against the errors of the church of Rome; and before the civil wars in England; also the Puritans, before the plagues and the fire in London; the Methodists to America, before the late war; many pious ministers in the established church, and of other denominations, before the late troubles in Ireland. And what shall I say of the faithful testimony now borne in England and Scotland? Is its rejection the forerunner of our destruction? I have my fears. Consider the infidelity, ignorance, pride, luxury, dissipation, and love of pleasure, particularly gaming; the profaneness, the immorality, as injustice, cruelty, oppression, the intemperance which prevail.—God's long-suffering does answer the end with many. Although it does not appear that the ministry of Noah, or the example of Lot in Sodom, or that of Joseph, &c., in Egypt, or of Abraham, &c., in Canaan, had much success; yet Jonah at Nineveh, Daniel at Babylon and in the court of Persia, Moses and the Prophets among the Israelites, John the Baptist, Christ and the Apostles among the Jews, had success. Many thousands were saved in Judea through their ministry.—What has God's long-suffering towards

the nations on the Continent, towards America, Ireland, and our own country, effected? We reply, it has saved and still saves, myriads.—God's long-suffering towards churches, and towards families, is likewise productive of salvation; it has the same end in view towards individuals. Multitudes, by means of it, are brought to repentance.

Where it does not answer this end, the fault is our own. It is owing to our "despising the goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering" of God, that is, to our undervaluing, and slighting, and not laying it to heart, through ignorance, "hardness, and an impenitent (that is, inconsiderate and unrelenting,) heart," (See Rom. ii. 4, 5.) Is this the case with any of you? [Examine; and address—families—individuals—persecutors—the wilfully ignorant, wicked, &c., as above.]—But

III. HOW MAY WE BE ENABLED, AS THE APOSTLE DIRECTS, TO ACCOUNT THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD SALVATION?

Guard against infidelity, as to the being and attributes of God, his overruling providence. a future state, and the great truths of his Gospel.—Against inattention. and carelessness. Consider especially the dispensations of his providence towards nations, churches, &c.—and compare them with the doctrines and predictions of his Word.—Dare not to live in known sin, inward or outward, of omission or commission. or in impenitence, or in an unsafe state; but get and keep peace with God and peace of conscience.—Be always watchful, circumspect, and prepared for the coming of the Lord in whatever way. (Matt. xxiv. 42; Luke xii. 35—48; xxi. 34.)—Live a life of prayer, and diligently use all the means of grace, and guard against formality in, or an abuse of

the means, by substituting them in the place of the end. Take care you be not hypocritical, even in the present means of fasting and humiliation. — — * * * *

CCLI.

GROWTH IN GRACE THE ONLY SECURITY AGAINST FALLING FROM IT.

2 PETER iii. 17, 18

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

It is undoubtedly the greatest proof of affection, to warn those we love against the dangers to which we perceive them to be exposed, and to point out the way of safety to them; such is the course pursued by St. Peter, with respect to the christian brethren he addressed in this Epistle.—We have here,

I. A CAUTION AGAINST A PARTICULAR EVIL.

“Beware, lest ye also being led away,” &c.—This caution can only be understood as given to those that are steadfast.—It respects our falling—from steadfastness of principle, or of doctrine. (Eph. iv. 4, 5.) We are in danger of being led away from this, by the various errors that are continually disseminated from the pulpit, the press and in conversation. (Eph. iv. 14.) Consider the consequence of being led away to ourselves; it will greatly injure both our holiness and happiness; to others, whom it will probably lead into reasonings,

nd cause to stumble, or prejudice against the truth; towards God, whom it will dishonour, and whose truth and ways and work it will expose to reproach and contempt.—From steadfastness of experience; of sorrow or sin, and hatred to it; of confidence in a sin-pardoning God, and of a conviction of his love and favour; of hope, lively and joyful, of everlasting life; of love to God, in return for his love to us; of communion and fellowship with him. We are in danger of being led away from this, by neglecting the means of preserving our experience, by formality in the means; or by grieving, in whatever way, that Holy Spirit of God, which is the one source of all true religion. The consequence of this will be great fluctuation and anxiety of mind, or the loss of all vital religion, and sinking into a “form of godliness without the power.”—From steadfastness of practice.—We may be led from it by the lukewarmness, sloth, and love of ease and pleasure, belonging to our nature, or by the lukewarmness and sloth of those about us. The consequence will be, our own conscience is first wounded, and then perhaps by degrees seared; reproach is brought upon the ways of God, and others are prevented from beginning or persevering to walk in them, and God is greatly dishonoured. —

II. HOW THIS EVIL MAY BE PREVENTED.

“Grow in grace,” &c. —In the free unmerited favour of God: though there are not degrees in justification, yet there are in the favour of God. In his image and nature; viz., in power over, and deadness to, sin; in deadness to the world, “the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, the pride of life;” to ourselves, to dependence on our own wisdom, righteousness and

strength, to irregular and inordinate self-love, to self-will, self-seeking. In discernment, tenderness and peace of conscience. In confidence in God, and a hope of his kingdom. In love to him, his word, his ways, and people. In lowliness before him. In resignation to him. In zeal for his glory. In obedience to his will. In meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering towards all. In benevolence, kindness, bounty, and liberality according to our power. In the temporal and prudent use of all God's creatures. In universal purity, and holiness of heart and life. — —

In order to the above, grow in the "knowledge of our Lord and Saviour," &c.—Of his person as God-man, whereby we may see what an infinite fulness there is in him, and how nearly related he is to us, and therefore what we may reasonably expect from him.—Of his offices as a *Teacher*, and may increase in our acquaintance with the nature, certainty, and importance of his doctrine; as a *Mediator*, and may know the virtue and efficacy of his atonement and intercession; as a *Saviour*, knowing by experience, more fully, that he hath saved us: as an *Example*, imitating him more perfectly and uniformly. — —

III. HOW WE MAY BE ENABLED THUS TO DO.

The grand means, on the part of God, are his Word and Spirit. His word must be heard, read, considered, and laid to heart. His Spirit must be sought in prayer and watchfulness.—We must guard against, and deny ourselves those things, which would impede our progress in religion.—Growth in grace, like growth in health, strength, &c., may be forwarded or impeded by food, air, and exercise. * * * *

CCLII.

FRIENDSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND HIS
SON CONSIDERED AS THE CHRISTIAN'S
PRIVILEGE.

1 JOHN i. 3.

*-Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his
Son Jesus Christ.*

How strong are the evidences afforded us of the truth of Christianity! and how unreasonable is infidelity!—The Apostles were eye and ear witnesses of the facts they relate, and experienced in their own souls the power and efficacy of the doctrines which they taught, as founded upon those facts. “What we have seen and heard,” says the Apostle St. John, “declare we unto you.”—Hence we are sure they could not be deceived themselves; and considering the many miracles which they wrought in confirmation of their testimony, together with their upright and unblameable conversation, which were manifest to all men, we are equally sure they have not deceived us, by bearing a testimony which they knew to be false. So that we have all the proof we could reasonably desire or expect, of the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed.

But for what end have we been instructed in those things? Why was the Gospel preached to mankind, or christianity established in the world? This important question the Apostle answers in the verse before us. “What we have seen and heard,” says he, “declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.” He seems to mean, “that ye may have the same fellowship which we have.” And what that was

he immediately informs us, adding in the words of our text, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Whence it appears that the great end aimed at by christianity is to introduce us into fellowship with God and with Christ. For this purpose, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" enlightened us by his doctrine, animated us by his example, and suffered in our stead. For this, the great truths of the Gospel, "at first spoken by the Lord, were confirmed unto us by those that heard him, God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will." And in order to the same end, the word of the Gospel is still preached, prayers addressed to God, and ordinances administered. All are intended to bring us to this, that we may have "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

In these words, therefore, we have a very full, though short account of the religion of Jesus. It is fellowship with God and with Christ, through the eternal Spirit, by whose agency, as will soon appear, we are put in possession of the blessing. In this very thing, the essence, I do not say of natural religion, or of Judaism, but of christianity, consists. If a man might be a good heathen, like Cornelius, who "feared God and wrought righteousness;" or, in some sense, a pious Jew, like old Simeon, who "waited for the consolation of Israel," without the fellowship here spoken of, which will be greatly doubted, yet, it is certain, without it, no man can be a good or thorough christian, or possessed of the glorious privileges of the Gospel of Christ, which far exceed those vouchsafed to mankind in any former dispensations of Divine grace.

Surely then it is of the greatest importance that we understand the nature of this fellowship, both that we may form a true judgment of our own state, whether we are christians indeed and in truth, and also that we may know what is the hope of our calling. Of our calling, I say, for this grace is by no means confined to primitive times, but is the invaluable privilege of all ages and nations to whom the glorious Gospel of Christ, called for this reason "the ministration of the Spirit,") is made known. For the Lord Jesus, before his glorification, asked of his Father this fellowship for all that "should believe on him," in whatever age or nation, when he prayed that they might be "one with him as he is one with the Father;" and knowing that his Father heard him always, he promised it to all who would show their love to him by keeping his commandments, when he said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make up our abode with him." This blessing having been purchased by his death, and received in consequence of his ascension into heaven, he waits to confer it "even upon the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them," and make them "an habitation of himself by his Spirit." Since, therefore, the subject before us is of such deep importance, let us give it an attentive and careful consideration. Inquire we,

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS FELLOWSHIP.

Here I must premise, that the Greek word, (*κοινωνία*), and the English words *communion* and *fellowship*, by either of which it is rendered in the New Testament, are words of somewhat extensive meaning, and imply several things. There must be a mutual *acquaintance*,

friendship, and intimacy between those who have fellowship together. They must also be concerned for one another's interest, and in many respects, (as the Greek word derived from *κοινος* intimates,) must have "all things in common." Now let us apply this observation to the subject before us, and see how the saints have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

This fellowship supposes a mutual *acquaintance*. This is previously necessary in order to it. It is not usual with mankind to admit persons into fellowship with them of whom they know nothing. No: they must first be well acquainted with their character and circumstances; so here God and Christ and the saints know each other well. "I know my sheep," says Jesus, "and am known of mine;" and the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, speaks of "knowing God, and being known of him." The Father and the Son know those they admit into fellowship with them to be naturally ignorant, sinful, guilty, helpless, and wretched, full of all evil, destitute of all good, and yet—what astonishing grace! what amazing condescension!—they do not reject them! they freely receive them to the possession of such an honourable privilege. But before this, they prepare them for it by begetting in them true repentance for all past sin, and faith in Christ, which working by love, preserves them from the dominion of sin for the future, and renders them obedient to God's holy will.

Thus it is that the saints are also made acquainted with God. By a faith of the operation of his Spirit, they know the Father in all his divine attributes, especially in his infinite *wisdom*, as privy to all their sins, in thought, word and deed; his unspotted *holiness* hating

in with perfect hatred; his inflexible *justice*, by which he is invariably inclined to punish it; and in his almighty *power*, whereby he is able to take vengeance on all the workers of iniquity. And yet, sinful as they are, they are encouraged to hold communion with him, because they know him, further, as *merciful* and *gracious*, who, notwithstanding his other attributes, pardoneth them through a Mediator. *Him* they also know, in his person and offices, and hereby are satisfied God can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in *Jesus*." Thus through him they "have access by one spirit unto the Father," with whom they are fully reconciled, and to whom they are affectionately united.

or,

This fellowship implies, a mutual *friendship* and *affection*. The people of God being "acquainted with him," they are "at peace" with him. There is a sense indeed in which God is at peace with and loves all mankind. "He is in Christ," says the Apostle, "reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Having received at the hands of his Son a perfect atonement, a complete expiation of the sins of the whole world, he "willeth not the death of a sinner," but, on the contrary, "willeth all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." Hence he "waits to be gracious" to all, is "loving to every man, and his tender mercy is over all his works." He compassionates the misery of his sinful creatures, and is ever ready to relieve them; nor is there any obstruction to their being relieved in his justice, the demands of which his Son hath fully satisfied.

But in a different and more exalted sense is he at peace with and loves those he admits to fellowship with

himself. He has actually forgiven their offences; "and being justified by faith, they have peace with God." He has taken them into favour, and is well pleased with them, as he is with the Son of his love, to whom they are united, and through whom they are accepted. "The upright are his delight," says Solomon. And Isaiah, speaking of the state of the christian church in Gospel days, then future, has those remarkable words, applicable to every individual believer in particular, as well as to the people of God in general, "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God; thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate, but thou shalt be called Hephzibah," *i. e.* my delight is in her, "and thy land Beulah," *i. e.* married, "for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." To this comfortable and striking passage of Scripture suffer me to add another no less comfortable, and striking. Our Lord, in his last intercessory prayer to his Father, speaks thus concerning all believers, (John xvii. 23,) "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me;" and again, ver. 26, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Thus you see the Father bears the same kind of affection for believers which he bears for the Son of his love. He takes complacency in them as he does in him, and that because they are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bone."

Hence it follows that the Saviour must love them too,

To discover the nature and degree of his love, he calls them his *friends*, his *brethren*, his *bride*, nay, his *members*. And can a man avoid loving the members of his body? Surely "no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Is not every man concerned for the safety and welfare of his bodily members? Does he not feel for them? Does he not take care to preserve them from injury, and to afford them suitable nourishment? Just so, but infinitely more, does Christ love his people. For "we have not an high-priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but one who most sensibly feels for us, and sympathizes with us; who has a share, as it were, in our joys and sorrows. Accordingly we find when he met Saul in the heat of his persecuting rage and fury, he addressed him thus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He accounts what is done against his people as done against himself, even as a man accounts the injury done to his hand or foot, or any other member, as done to himself. And on the other hand, he reckons the favours conferred upon his people, as bestowed upon himself, as he assures us, (Matt. xxv.) "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "And yet Zion saith, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me! Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee? Behold I have engraven thee on the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." How unreasonable then is our unbelief, our doubts, and fears. They can have no solid foundation, provided we are sincerely devoted to him. That we may not again be

guilty of them, let us reflect upon one other Scripture respecting the love of Christ; "As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Thus testifies the faithful and true Witness. The Father, we know, hath loved him with an affection which is infinite, unchangeable, and eternal as his nature, and so Christ loves his people, his sheep who "hear his voice and follow him," who persevere in faith, love, and holiness. His love to them is boundless, constant, and everlasting; it is from eternity to eternity. What enlightened and believing mind does not wish frequently to contemplate this love, and to dwell on this darling theme! Who can forbear joining with the spouse, and saying, "Draw me, we will run after thee, we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine." For this love, as was observed, is mutual. The saints also love the Father and the Son. That "carnal mind, which is enmity against God," and which is natural to them, is taken away by divine grace, and the love of God and Christ is shed abroad in their hearts. The Spirit of Truth opens their blind eyes, and "with open face they behold the glory of the Lord;" "behold what manner of love it is which the Father hath bestowed upon them, that they should be called the sons of God." Hence they "love him who hath first loved them." This same Spirit "hath taken of the things of Jesus, and hath shewn unto them;" hath discovered Christ to them in his person and offices, his love and sufferings. Hence, though with eyes of flesh they "have not seen him, yet they love him." Yes, "the love of Christ constrains them, while they thus judge that he died for all, that they who live should not live unto themselves, but to him who died for them." Thus it is that "Christ dwells

in their hearts, *i. e.*, in their affections, “by faith.” Thus it is that “dwelling in love, they dwell in God, and God in them;” “the Father and Son come into them, and take up their abode with them.” They are, as the Apostle expresses it, (Col. ii. 2,) “knit together,” (*συνβιβασθεντες*,) *closely compacted and cemented* to each other in “love.” Thus is the Lord’s remarkable prayer (John xvii. 21,) for his people answered; “I pray for all that shall believe on me, through their word,” *i. e.* the word of his Apostles, “that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;”—“the glory thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one.” Such honour have all the saints, who do not rest short of their privileges. Such honour had the primitive christians, such close union with the Father and the Son, when they could with confidence demand, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (as it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day, we are appointed as sheep for the slaughter;) nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!” What a full assurance of faith and hope is here expressed! How rare, in these degenerate days, in which the love of so many is waxed cold! Happy, however, is any one who experiences it!—But if there exist between God and his people such an union as this, we need not wonder if there be a

third thing implied in this fellowship, a mutual intercourse, a blessed and holy *intimacy* between them.

God in Christ visits them in his ordinances, while they hear his word, sing his praises, call upon his name, or receive the tokens of his dying love; while they assemble together in his presence, and use the means he hath appointed for their edification, he is in the midst of them, as he hath promised. "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," says Jesus. He is present with his people when they wait upon him, that he may draw out their desires after himself, and satisfy them; that he may silence their fears, and encourage their hopes, solace them in grief, and increase their joy, calm their passions, and shed abroad his love in their souls; that he may raise their affections to things above, "whereby they sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus, while their life is hid with Christ in God." But he does not confine his presence with them to his ordinances, or the assemblies of his people. If he did, what must his saints do when laid on beds of languishing, when shut up in prisons for his sake, when banished into wildernesses, and obliged to lodge "in dens and caves of the earth, wandering about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented?" Does he then forget them? Can their enemies, who may seclude them from the society of each other, debar them from the presence of God, who is their chief joy, or from Christ, the beloved of their souls? O no. "Behold he is with them always," at all times, and in all places. He was with Daniel in the lion's den, with the three children in the fiery furnace, with Paul and Silas in the dungeon when they sang praises in the night;

and to all his people he hath promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee:" "Fear not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (sai. xli. 10.) And again, (ch. xliii. 1, 2,) "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, and thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Hence it is that the saints may safely depend on the word for direction in all difficulties, succour in all temptations, comfort in all troubles, for a supply of all their wants, and guidance through all the intricate paths of life. They may adopt the words of the royal Psalmist and boldly say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Being children of God, their heavenly Father will take care of them, will allow them the nearest access to himself. His providence shall superintend them, and his "Spirit guide them into all truth." They shall "have an uncensored word from the Holy One teaching them all things," all things needful or useful for them to know. "For the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." "Shall I hide from Abraham," says God, "that thing which I do?" "I call you not servants," says Christ, "for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Thus does he acquaint his people (whether by his providence,

word, or Spirit,) with his whole will, so far as it concerns their present or future happiness.

And if the Lord condescends to speak to them, shall they not hearken to him? If he allow them access to him, shall they not use their liberty, and “enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ?” Shall they not “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,” that they may make known their wants and unbosom their souls to him, whisper their cares into his ear, and acquaint him with all their trouble? O yes, they will take delight in approaching unto God, and will account “one day spent in his courts better than a thousand spent elsewhere.” “For they behold the beauty of the Lord, while they inquire in his temple.” Moreover, “he hides them in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle does he hide them.” “he takes them into his banqueting house, and his banner over them is love; his left hand is under their head, and his right hand doth embrace them.” They speak to him with the confidence of a child to his father, a wife to her husband, or a man to his friend.

“Kindly he opens them his ear,
And bids them pour their sorrow there,
And tell him all their pains;
Thus while they ease their burden’d heart,
In every wo he bears a part,

His arms embrace them, and his hand their drooping head
sustains.”

“They walk with him,” like Enoch of old, in all his pleasant ways; they “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” and are companions of their God and King, who is become their father, friend, and husband in Christ Jesus. But to proceed:

It is implied in this fellowship, that the parties are

mutually interested in each other, and, in a sense, have all things in common. Their interests may be said to be, as it were, mingled and intimately connected. A specimen of such kind of fellowship we find among the first christians. "The multitude of them that believed," it is said, (Acts iv. 32,) "were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." This is spoken of the fellowship of the first christians with each other. But in a sense somewhat similar to this, though vastly more exalted, God and Christ and the saints have fellowship together. But here we have need of the greatest care that we speak only the words of soberness and truth.

The saints being so deeply interested in the good will of God, they are likewise interested in his care and protection, his help and bounty. He is infinitely concerned for their happiness, in time and in eternity, and nothing shall be wanting on his part to insure and promote it. Whatever his infinite love can design, his infinite wisdom devise, or his infinite power execute, shall not be withheld. All that he has, and all that he is, may be said to be at their service, and is given to them as far as they are capable of receiving it.

Now "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." The riches, honours, and good things of the world are all in his hands, and at his disposal, and he giveth them to whomsoever he will. And he *would* give them to his people if he saw they would be of any real use to them. Nay, he *does* give them to those of them whom he foresees they will not hurt, but benefit. For we have his word of eternal veracity for it, that he "withholdeth nothing good from those who walk up-

rightly." If, therefore, his people are not rich, honourable, and prosperous in this world, it is not owing to any want of love in God towards them, or ability to help them; but it is because he knows it would not be to their advantage to be so situated. He often sends poverty, reproach, and affliction, because he knows that these things have most tendency to advance their present and eternal welfare. He chastens them, because he loves them, that they may be made "partakers of his holiness," and, of consequence, his happiness, which is the one end he has in view in all his dispensations. All the dispensations of his providence, whether prosperous or adverse, are under the direction of infinite wisdom, which cannot fail of discerning, and of boundless love which cannot fail of intending, what shall be advantageous to his people. Hence it is infallibly certain that "all things work for good to them who love God." But not only earth but heaven also is the Lord's. The paradise of pleasure which is above, the "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," the New Jerusalem, with all its splendour, bliss, and glory; all these are his, and all these hath he given to his saints. For them he hath reserved "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away;" yea, "an exceeding great and an eternal weight of glory." Possessed of perfect bodies and perfect souls, equally immortal, they shall inhabit those pure and everlasting abodes, which infinite love, directed by unsearchable wisdom, and assisted by almighty power, hath prepared for their reception; and seated on thrones of glory, shall reign in divine and heavenly bliss for ever and ever.

But their happiness here and hereafter chiefly con-

sists in the enjoyment of God. For not only all that God *has*, but all that he *is*, belongs to the saints. The infinite God is all their own! “I am thy shield,” says God to Abraham, “and thy exceeding great reward;” exceeding great indeed! What can a soul desire more than infinity? “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup,” says the Psalmist, and adds, with grateful admiration, “the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage.” Asaph also (Ps. lxxiii. 24,) professes his confidence that God “would guide him by his counsel, and after that receive him to his glory;” and then he informs us that the glory he expected, consisted in enjoying God himself; adding, in most striking language, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee, my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

“’Tis God himself is my immediate bliss,
My paradise, my everlasting heaven.”

—Even here, all the attributes of God are engaged for the benefit of his people. His infinite love has fixed upon them as the objects of its complacency. His infinite wisdom discerns all their wants, temptations, and infirmities, and is ever devising means for their relief and support. And whatever his love designs, or his wisdom contrives for their good, his power is at hand to execute. Here then they may rest, and rejoice, and triumph. “The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him.”

“O! thou unbounded, self-sufficient Being,
How rich am I! how happy! how secure!
How full my portion in possessing thee!
My God, I cry, the treasure of my soul,
Give me my God, and let the world forsake me.”

Here, however, the happiness of the people of God is not complete, because they know but little of the worth of this inheritance while in this land of darkness; nor can they fully and immediately possess it in this state of sin and infirmity. Notwithstanding, even *now*, they are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And O! with what joyful adoration and transporting ecstasy shall they contemplate their riches and glory, when, "death being swallowed up in victory," and all things being subdued unto Christ, he shall "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all!" When they shall "hear a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall dwell among them and be their God." Then shall they know what that meaneth, "It is done: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; and I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; I will be his God, and he shall be my son." This is the summit of celestial felicity, the greatest happiness to which any creature can possibly be advanced! The full, perfect, and everlasting enjoyment of God! But how great this is, "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive;" no, nor into the mind of the most enlightened intelligence above! Its greatness is known and comprehended by God alone, whose understanding is infinite like his nature!

And now, my brethren, say how great is that mercy and goodness which raises creatures so sinful, so guilty, so wretched, to a participation of such astonishing

bliss and glory! How marvellous it is that such polluted and sinful creatures should, in a way consistent with the inflexible justice and unspotted purity of the ever blessed Jehovah, enjoy, here and hereafter, his favour, presence, and fellowship; should dwell with him and he with us! It could never be but through a Mediator invested with almighty power, and so all-sufficient to accomplish this great work, a work to which the ability of the highest archangel was utterly inadequate. In short, the Father could not be ours, if the Son was not ours. If we could not have received an interest in the Mediator, we must have been for ever excluded from the favour and enjoyment of God. But notwithstanding our sin, and guilt, and weakness, we may yet unite our praises with those of the angelic host, and for ever exult and triumph in God, *as our all*,—because,

Christ *is ours*. In his person and offices, in his grace and glory, does he freely give himself to his people; being “made of God unto them wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” Taught by his wisdom, they shall not err; clothed with his righteousness, their guilty shame shall not appear; and renewed by his grace, they shall possess the divine nature, and be fitted to enjoy a holy God. Protected by him, whose kingdom ruleth over all, their enemies shall never hurt them; assisted by him who has “all power in heaven and on earth,” they shall be “more than conquerors” over every foe; and supplied by him in whom “all fulness dwells,” they shall not want “grace to help in time of need.” He is their Redeemer from all evil, and their powerful Advocate and Intercessor before the throne of the Majesty on high. And behold for what he pleads, and with what authority! “Father,

I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me!" This is not all; they shall not only behold it, but possess it with him; for they are 'joint heirs with Christ.'" Accordingly he says to his Father, "The glory thou hast given me, I have given them;" and to every faithful servant he will say, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He hath appointed to his people a "kingdom, as his Father hath appointed unto him," that they may "eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, and sit upon thrones" of glory prepared for them, "and to him that overcometh will he grant to sit down with him on his throne, as he overcame, and is sat down with his Father on his throne."

And now, how 'happy are the people who are in such a case!' how "blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God!" Well might the Apostle observe in the words immediately following our text, "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full." We write them that you and following ages may read, mark, and inwardly digest them; that they may afford nourishment to your joy, that it may grow, increase, and come to maturity, that you may be filled with it; that Christ's "joy may be fulfilled in you, and that your joy may be full." And surely, my brethren, if we know our privileges, and possess them, our joy must be full indeed! If we can collect these various streams of joy, so deep, so broad, which I have been attempting to describe, and direct them all into one channel, our joy must overflow its banks, and bear us down into the ocean of God, where our bliss will be boundless as immensity, and lasting as the days of eternity.

Consider, my brethren, are not all the particulars I have mentioned plentiful sources of joy? Are not knowledge, love, friendship, riches, and honour, universally esteemed sources of joy? But O! what knowledge like the excellency of the knowledge of God and Christ? What love like the love of God in Christ Jesus? What friendship like that "with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ!" What honour to be compared to the honour that cometh from God! And who so rich as the man that possesseth all things!—Hail, then, ye that are so highly favoured of God as to be taken into fellowship with him! Blessed are ye among men, and blessed shall ye be for evermore! Think, O! think what he has done for you; from what a depth of poverty, and shame, and misery you have been rescued; and to what a height of wealth and honour and happiness ye are advanced! O! contemplate your privileges, let your heart muse on them, till the fire of gratitude kindle in your breast, and constrain you to devote your *all* to him, who hath given his *all* to you!

This leads me to make one observation more. As the Father and the Son are engaged for the interest of believers, so they, in return, are deeply concerned for the honour of God, and endeavour to promote it day by day. To this end they dedicate their bodies and souls, their time and talents, their health and strength, and property, to be at his disposal, and employed in obedience to his will, at all times and in all places. Convinced they "are not their own, but bought with a price," the precious blood of the Son of God, they devote themselves to him, "whose they are," and only study to "glorify him with their body and spirit which are his." They commit themselves to his protection,

leave their honour, and interest, and happiness to his management, and make it their care, “whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.” Thus is the relation mutual. Thus can the spouse of Christ say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am his:” and thus are the Apostle’s words verified, “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

I have only now to beg your patience a moment longer, while I add a few words by way of application and improvement.

I have been endeavouring to describe to you, my brethren, the nature of that fellowship in which the Apostle represents christianity as especially consisting; and I now call upon you, as you would not deceive yourselves with the shadow instead of the substance, to examine seriously and diligently into your experience on this matter, to inquire whether you enjoy this fellowship or not?—

If, upon examination, you find you have not this fellowship with the Father and the Son, nevertheless, for your encouragement, I may assure you, that your case, though deplorable, is not yet desperate. Deplorable it is, because not having fellowship with righteousness, you must have it with unrighteousness; not having communion with Christ, you must have communion with Belial. Yet not desperate, because you are still capable of possessing this glorious blessing. Yes, my friends, miserable and destitute as your present state is, you may yet be rich, and glorious, and happy, beyond conception. The ever-blessed and infinitely perfect *Jeho-*

vah offers you his favour, his friendship, his intimacy; offers to take you into communion with himself, and to share with you his own honours, and riches, and felicity! Consider what an offer this is! how far, infinitely far, beyond all you could have asked or thought! Consider to what an amazing dignity you yet may be advanced; and let a sense of your unworthiness lay you in the dust, while earnest desire and anticipating hope bear you along toward the enjoyment of this immensely valuable blessing. Be not discouraged; “be not faithless, but believing.” Though you “have destroyed yourself, in him is your help.” Fallen you are, it is true, into misery unfathomably deep, yet even from thence God can rescue you, yea, and raise you to happiness equal to that of the enraptured Seraphim. In this consists the glory of our nature, that we are capable of having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. You cannot give a man an higher title, than to say he possesses this good.

“A Christian is the highest style of man.”

To say a man is a lord, a prince, an emperor, is saying *nothing*; but to say he is a christian, has communion with God, is saying *every thing*; every thing that is great, and excellent, and happy. Now the degree of dignity next to this is, to be capable of this privilege, and in the way to possess it. And may I not say this of you? I have said you are capable of it, and it is your own fault if I cannot say you are in the way to possess it. The way God hath marked out in his blessed word, hath exhorted you to walk in it, and assured you it will infallibly bring you to the desired end. Hear and receive his kind commands; “Come out,” says he, “from

among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." In this way he will give you strength to walk, for "his grace is sufficient for you."

Persuaded then that God has not yet shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure, but still calls you to partake of his glory and immortality, sets before you an open door, and graciously invites you to enter: persuaded that he is merciful to forgive your past contempt of his goodness and abuse of his favours, and ready, after all your provocations, to admit you into union with himself, —leave your sins, and sinful courses, bid adieu to your wicked companions, desert the devil's service, break your league with hell, and covenant with death; and, with sorrow, shame, and self-abhorrence, renouncing all dependence on your own righteousness, apply instantly to the mercy of God, through a Mediator. Remember, it is only "through him you can have access to the Father;" it is only in that "new and living way Christ hath consecrated for you, through the veil of his flesh," that you "have free liberty to enter in the holiest." Come to God in any other way, and you shall be certainly rejected. Come to him in this way, and you shall meet with a gracious reception; for Christ is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Wherefore, "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and your bodies washed with pure water." I mean, apply to God in earnest prayer, that he would take you into fellowship with himself, confidently relying on the blood of Christ for the pardon of past

silt, utterly and resolutely forsaking all known sin through the influences of the Spirit, and making it your constant care for the future, to "walk worthy of him that hath called you to his kingdom and glory." Thus all his exceeding great and precious promises be fulfilled in you: in particular, God "will live in you, and walk in you; he will be your God, and you shall be his people."

And you, my brethren, whom God hath so highly honored as to take into fellowship with himself, know the worth of your privileges, and be thankful; know how unworthy you are of them, and be humble. Learn duly to prize the riches of infinite goodness; and while you rejoice therein, let lively gratitude animate your soul, and cheerful praise dwell upon your tongue. Let our heart praise him, let your life praise him, and that at all times, and in all places, in poverty as in riches, in sickness as in health, in pain as in ease. For if you have fellowship with the Father and the Son, infinite cause have you to praise him whatever your outward situation is. In the mean time, be humbled in the dust. Not unto me, not unto me, but to thy name be the praise." Never forget the words of Jesus, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Let him have all the glory of his own work, and attribute nothing to ourselves but sin and shame. Thus lie low at his feet, watch, pray, and believe; and his promise shall be accomplished, "With him will I dwell that is of a contrite and humble Spirit." Thus your fellowship shall be continued and increased till it is perfected, and you are "filled with all the fulness of God."

CCLIII.

CHRISTIAN PROFESSORS SHOULD IMITATE
CHRIST.

1 JOHN ii. 6.

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

MANKIND, even in these christian countries so called, seem to be but too generally comprehended in two classes,—one consisting of persons who make no serious profession of true religion at all; and the other of those who make an empty, or, at least, inconsistent profession of it. With persons of the former class I have nothing to do on the present occasion: indeed it is not easy for a Preacher of the Gospel to have to do with them at any time, for they will take care not to come within the sound of his voice. But to the latter, many of whom are commonly present from time to time in all places of Divine worship, and therefore are probably here, I will address myself, especially on one point, the vast importance of imitating and resembling Him, in whom we profess to believe, and whose disciples we regard ourselves. I am the more inclined to speak on this subject, because I am apprehensive that it is one much overlooked among some professors; and that on this account true and vital religion is greatly on the decline with them. Indeed, if I know any thing of the christian world, it is verging fast towards Antinomianism. Men are beginning, more and more, to content themselves with mere doctrinal christianity, and to rest

satisfied with right notions of those things in their heads, which they ought to experience in their hearts, and practise in their lives. This anti-christianism was beginning to pervade the church even in the Apostle's days, and some of them, especially St. James and St. John, used their utmost efforts to check the encroaching evil. This is evident from the general tenor of their epistle. As to St. John, it appears from many passages of this his first epistle, and especially from the paragraph from whence I take my text. — — Inquire we,

I. WHAT IT IS TO "ABIDE IN HIM?" AND WHO MUST BE UNDERSTOOD AS SAYING THAT THEY ABIDE IN HIM?

To abide in Christ, is to continue—in those relations in which, as children of God, we stand to him, as his disciples, his subjects, his servants, his friends, his brethren, his spouse.—In an interest in him as a Teacher, a Mediator, and a Saviour, being enlightened, reconciled, and saved by him; as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.—In union with him, as the foundation on which we are built, the true vine of which we are branches, the living head of which we are members. — —

The Apostle does not speak here merely of saying in word, but of professing, and even of saying in our heart, or thinking respecting ourselves that we "abide in him." Now those who profess to abide in faith, in Christ and the Gospel, or to continue to be believers, do in effect profess to abide in him, for all true believers are in him. (Gal. ii. 20; Rom. xi. 20; Rom. i. 16; 1 John v. 13.) —All who profess to abide in hope, viz., an hope of eternal life, profess to abide in him; for all hope of eternal life, that is well grounded and lively, flows from

union with Christ. (Col. i. 27, 28.)—All who profess to abide in love, profess to abide in him. (1 John iv. 16.) Love is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, (Gal. v. 22,) and can only be where he is.—All who profess to be in a justified state, profess to abide in him; for those to whom “there is no condemnation,” “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” and “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom. viii. 1, 2; 1 John v. 11, 12.)—All who profess to be regenerated, or converted, or created anew, profess to abide in him; for only those that are “in Christ” are new creatures; (2 Cor. v. 17;) and those that are created unto good works, are “created in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. ii. 10.)

II. IN WHAT SENSE, AND IN WHAT RESPECTS, SUCH OUGHT TO “WALK EVEN AS HE WALKED.”

To “walk,” here is a figurative expression, intended as in numberless other passages, to signify our spirit and conduct, all our dispositions, words, and actions—and that towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves. If we profess to abide in Christ, or think we abide in him, we ought to take care that we be conformed to his example, in our tempers, words, and works. (John xii. 26; Phil. ii. 5; Col. ii. 6; 1 Peter ii. 21; text.)

In what respects?—In seriousness of mind; not gloominess, or sullenness, or moroseness, but habitual seriousness, solemnity, and awe, knowing that we are always in the presence of God. and on the verge of death, of judgment, and eternity, and that we have no light matters, but matters of everlasting moment, to attend to and insure. Thus Christ walked, and thus we

ught to walk. In watchfulness, as conscious of the various dangers and the enemies which surround us. In self-denial.—In a spirit of abstraction and separation from the world. (Jam. iv. 4; Mat. vi. 24; John vii. 14, 16.)—In spiritual-mindedness.—In love to God; John xiv. 31; 1 John iv. 16, 19;) to his people; Eph. v. 1, 2; John xv. 12, 13; 1 John iv. 7;) to all men, even our enemies. (Luke xxiii. 34.)—In zeal. (John . 17.)—In humility before God and man. (Matt. xi. 9.)—In resignation and patience before God. Matt. xvi. 39, 42, 44.)—In meekness and gentleness towards man. (2 Cor. x. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 23.)—In a long-suffering and forgiving spirit. (Eph. iv. 31, 32.)—In a merciful, compassionate, and sympathizing disposition. (Matt. iv. 14; John xi. 35; Heb. ii. 17; iv. 15.)—In blamelessness. (Heb. vii. 26.)—In usefulness, employing every grace and gift, and all our time and talents, for the glory of God, and the good of our fellow creatures. Acts x. 38; John iv. 34.)—In temperance and chastity. In purity and universal holiness. (John viii. 46; Heb. ii. 26. — —

[Conclude, by showing how we may be conformed to his example, and walk as he walked.] — —

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CCLIV

THE SON OF GOD MANIFESTED TO DESTROY SATAN'S WORKS.

(A CHRISTMAS SERMON.)

1 JOHN iii. 8.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.

As this is the season of the year which the churches of Christ, in all parts of Christendom, have appointed for the commemoration of the greatest event which ever took place among men,—the manifestation of Christ in the flesh,—it is proper that, as members of one of these churches, and professors of christianity, we should consider the design of this appointment, and in what way we may observe it with advantage and benefit. With respect to the design of it, we may ask, Was a day set apart every year to celebrate the birth of Christ, merely with a view to keep up among mankind the memory of that event? No, surely; but also, and more especially, with a view to keep in their remembrance, and impress upon their minds, how and for what end he was manifested; that while they were unfeignedly thankful for so great an instance of divine condescension and love, as appeared in his manifestation, they might take care, with respect to themselves, that it might not be in vain, but the end of it might be fully answered.—Permit me, therefore, to call your attention to this subject at this time; a subject upon which the words I have just read, are as well calculated to give us light as, perhaps, any others in the Bible.—Reflect we then,—

I. ON THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

Who was manifested? “The Son of God.” He who is here called the *Son* of God, is elsewhere called the *Wisdom* of God, (Prov. viii. 22—30,) for “in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” and in and through him, God’s wisdom shines forth to us: the *Word* of God, (John i. 1,) for he speaketh and maketh known the Father, and his will to mankind: “the image of the invisible God,” (Col. i. 15,) “the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” (Heb. i. 2,) the first and fairest picture, representation, or manifestation of the Father, the invisible God, “whom, (immediately,) no man hath seen nor can see;” (1 Tim. vi. 16;) hence, John i. 18; xiv. 7—11; the *immediate maker* of all; (John i. 3; Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2;) the Father, however, being still the fountain of creation, as well as redemption: (1 Cor. viii. 6;) the *upholder* of all: (Isai. ix. 6; Col. i. 17;) the *heir and lord* of all. (Heb. i. 2; Col. i. 17.) — —

How was he manifested?—He appeared in the flesh. (1 Tim. iii. 16; John i. 14; Heb. ii. 14.)—In respect of this it is said, (Phil. ii. 7, *εαυτον εκενωσεν*,) he *emptied himself*, as indeed he did, for he veiled his perfections, and in some sense, of which we are not now proper judges, laid aside his glory, when he became a man, an infant. He was born in poverty and meanness, made subject to infirmity and affliction; sin being imputed to him; yea, was made to suffer death—an ignominious, painful and accursed one.

But through all this humiliation, by degrees, and those increasing more and more, (*εφανερωθη*,) he was *manifested* to be the Son of God, and the Messiah.—Before

and at his birth. His conception was foretold by Gabriel. (Luke i. 11, 26.) His birth was made known to the shepherds, (Luke ii. 9,) and to the eastern Magi—(Matt. ii. 1, 2.)—In his childhood. Observe him with the doctors in the temple. (Luke ii. 46.)—When he entered on his public ministry: by the testimony of John, (Luke iii. 16,) at his baptism. (Luke iii. 22.)—By his fasting forty days, and overcoming the devil in his temptations. (Matt. iv.)—By his doctrine; its simplicity, sublimity, purity, and authority. By his miracles, which were many, and mighty, done with majesty and authority. By the divinity, of which he was full, and which appeared on several occasions, particularly at his transfiguration. (Matt. xvii. 2—5.)—In his holy life: his sufferings and death, the patience and meekness wherewith he suffered: his resurrection, demonstrated “by many infallible proofs,” and before many witnesses; (Rom. i. 4;) his ascension into heaven in the presence of his disciples.—In the whole process through which he passed, answering exactly, as the evangelists have pointed out, to the predictions of the prophets concerning him.—In the miracles, wrought by the power of God to confirm the testimony of those who bore witness to those particulars respecting him, and in the prophecies delivered by himself, which have since been accomplished.—So that “we have not followed cunningly devised fables,” when we have made these things known to you; and this is now spoken “that you may know the certainty of those things in which you have been instructed.”—But,

II. FOR WHAT END WAS HE MANIFESTED?

Why did this glorious person stoop so low, and do and suffer so much, and manifest himself in so extraor-

dinary a way? Who hath ears to hear, let him hear!—"That he might destroy the works of the devil."

What are "the works of the devil?" They are doubtless many and mighty; for he was once a glorious angel, possessed of wonderful powers. But his works, here alluded to, are those he has performed since his fall.—

"Being not less than arch-angel fallen."

Yet not all these, but his works in this our world. His end was to destroy man; and in order thereto, to involve him in God's wrath and curse. This he could not do without making man sin; and to sin he could not entice him, without persuading him to believe in himself and disbelieve God.—Hence his first work is unbelief, or credulity; unbelief toward God, and credulity toward Satan. See Gen. iii. 1, 4, 5. And this is his first work to this day; tempting us to unbelief, as to our fallen state, and God's threatenings; when we are awakened as to his promises; and when we have embraced these as to the danger we are in from our enemies, and the necessity of holiness to fit us for heaven. Sin is his second work; *i. e.*, the transgression of the divine law; involving us in its guilt, power, and defilement, both inward and outward. Compare Gen. iii. 6, with James i. 13—15. Thus he prevailed with Eve, and thus does he with us. His third work is death and destruction—that of the soul, the loss of God's favour, image, and fellowship with him, and the procuring of wrath, depravity, misery, present and eternal;—that of the body;—that of this outward world, which is given through sin, to destruction. — —

————— " Sin has laid waste
Not here and there a country, but a world:

Despatching at a wide extended blow,
 Entire mankind; and for their sakes defacing
 A whole creation's beauty with rude hands;
 Blasting the foodful grain, the loaded branches,
 And marking all its way with ruin."

View the soul of man; his understanding darkened; his will perverted; his affections disordered; his conscience blind, insensible, and guilty: his memory weakened and debased, a mere lumber-room of impertinence and folly. —

View the body of man, naked, infirm, afflicted, dead, returning to the dust of which it was formed. View the habitation of man, the earth put under a curse; hence barrenness and disorder in the air and elements, inclement seasons, thunder, lightning, whose effects are frequently so injurious, earthquakes, volcanoes; a world to be set on fire and reduced to ashes. —

"Amazing period, when each mountain height
 Outburns Vesuvius; rocks eternal pour
 Their melted mass, as rivers once they pour'd;
 Stars rush, and final ruin fiercely drives
 Her ploughshare o'er creation!"

—Hence, you see, the devil's works are to undo, to pull down and destroy what God hath made: but the Son of God is sent to repair the breach, to abolish sin, kill death, and destroy destruction. (Isai. xl. 9, 10.) A great work indeed! — —

III. HOW DOES IT APPEAR THAT HIS MANIFESTATION IN THE FLESH IS CALCULATED TO ANSWER THIS END; AND HOW MAY IT BE ANSWERED IN EACH OF US?

Being manifested in the flesh, he is become a prophet, teaching the way of life, confirming his doctrine

by a holy life, by his miracles and prophecies, and enlightening our minds by his Holy Spirit. He removes our unbelief, and both lays a foundation for faith, and enables us to build on that foundation. Having assumed the body prepared for him, he is a priest offering up himself, bearing our sin and the chastisement necessary to shew its evils before angels and men, and interceding for sinners, and obtaining and bestowing the sanctifying Spirit; thus he removes its *guilt*, by satisfying the demands of justice, and making way for the exercise of mercy: (2 Cor. v 18, 21:) *its power*; since God being reconciled, he next communicates the Holy Spirit; whereby we are born again, are made new creatures, and conquer sin: (2 Cor. v 17; Tit. ii. 14:) *its defilement*; by sending to his believing people continual and increasing supplies of his grace. Hence, in reward of his sufferings, he is king. By his resurrection he overcame death; by his ascension he opened a passage into heaven, and now sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, “making all things new;” (Rev. xxi. 5;) renewing first the soul, then the body, and finally the habitation of man. — —

That all this may be effected in and for us, faith is necessary. preceded by a deep sense that we are involved in the works of the devil; hence sorrow for, and hatred to these works; implying a conviction that Christ was “manifested to destroy the works of the devil,” and of his ability and willingness to do it; importing, also, an application to him, and confidence in him, for this salvation from Satan’s works, subjection and obedience to him in heart and life.—Thus sin and death, as well as unbelief. are destroyed, and righteousness, and life obtained, now, and for ever. — —

INFERENCES.

Has such a glorious person been manifested in such an extraordinary manner, and for such a glorious end? Then it is highly proper to commemorate his manifestation, and not at Christmas only, but at all times.—But how? By doing those works, and helping to uphold that kingdom, he came to destroy? No! But the contrary.—How great the inconsistency and infatuation of many, even called christians!—Inquire, is the end of his manifestation answered, or answered in part in you? If not, your guilt and misery is great. (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) If never answered you will be left involved in Satan's works for ever, having a super-added condemnation, for rejecting so great a salvation. (1 Peter iv. 17; Heb. x. 28—30.) — —

CCLV

THE LOVE OF GOD IN SENDING HIS SON.

1 JOHN iv. 9.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

How important a part of true religion is love! (1 Cor. xiii.) Its nature and excellency is stated by St. John in the two preceding verses. (Ver. 7, 8.) It is of two kinds; the love of God and of our neighbour. As the latter of these flows from the former, so our love to God flows from his love to us. (Ver. 19.) Hence no subject is more profitable than this of the love of God to

s, which is represented in my text in the clearest point of view.—Consider,

I. THE MATTER OF FACT HERE ASSERTED.

“God sent his only begotten Son,” &c.—Whom did he send? His Son, his only begotten Son.—[Enlarge upon his character, and show how dear he was to the Father.]—In what sense did he send him into the world? Not as he sent Gabriel, &c., to visit it; but to assume our very nature.—In what condition? In a poor, mean, and suffering state.

II. THE END FOR WHICH HE SENT HIM INTO THE WORLD.

“That we might live through him.” We were dead, subject to spiritual, temporal, and eternal death.—“That we might live” spiritually; might be justified, and taken into favour with God; be put into possession of union with God; of a spiritual mind; the Divine image; that we might be raised from the dead to enjoy immortality. That we might be partakers of everlasting life, glory, and felicity, as to the whole man.—That we might live through him; his mediation, his Spirit, his Word, and by faith in him.—Now,

III. IN THIS WAS MANIFESTED THE LOVE OF GOD TOWARD US.

That God should send into the world a person so glorious and dear to him;—to assume our nature, and thereby to relinquish the dominion, honour, and happiness which he had with the Father;—that he should expose him to such poverty, ignominy, and misery,—and that for our sakes;—that we who are dead should live,

—live in such a glorious and happy state,—live through him, through his poverty, ignominy and death! — —

INFERENCE.

What influence ought this to have upon us? — —

CCLVI.

CHRISTIANITY THE ONLY MEANS OF OVER- COMING THE WORLD.

1 JOHN V. 4.

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

EXCELLENT are the virtues, and blessed the effects, which in the Scripture are ascribed to a true faith in Christ. It translates the soul in which it resides out of darkness into light, and from being foolish, as to divine things, makes it wise, &c. It acquits from guilt and condemnation, justifies, and gives peace with God. It sheds abroad the love of God and mankind in the heart, and thereby expels the love of the world and sin. It conquers sin, and creates a man anew in Christ Jesus, whence “the tree being good the fruit is good.” It fills him with joy and peace through believing. (Rom. xv. 13.) It even conquers the last enemy, death, disarms it of its sting, divests it of its terrors, gives it an angel-face, and instead of being an object of fear and dismay, renders it an object of desire and welcome expectation.—Some of these blessed fruits of a true faith are set before us in this paragraph. (Ver. 1—4.) Now as a reason why a true believer in the Lord Jesus experiences

these graces, and practises this obedience, it is added, "Whatsoever is born," &c. The world, in one view or another of it, is the grand hinderance of these graces and virtues, and a man can neither sincerely love God, nor his children, nor keep his commandments, unless he overcome the world.—But let us consider,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING BORN OF GOD.

Were I preaching to some congregations, it would be necessary to confute the unscriptural notion that to be baptised with water is to be "born of God," as if every baptised person had the love of God shed abroad in his heart, kept the commandments, and overcame the world! To mention this sentiment is sufficient to confute it. But it will be asked perhaps, why then does the church of England teach children to say, "In my baptism I was made a member of Christ," &c? I answer, that the church in her Catechism clearly distinguishes the inward and spiritual grace from the outward and visible sign of baptism, and shows the necessity of this as well as of the outward sign; and it is on this supposition that the grace accompanies the sign in the child baptised, that she terms it a child of God, &c. But what is the inward and spiritual grace? It is "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness. (1 John v. 4.) Thus it is explained Rom. vi. 3—11; Col. ii. 11—13.—In these passages it appears that in those that are born of God the old man, or state, or nature, is mortified and slain, and that a new man, or state, or nature, is received, and nourished.—In other words, to be born of God is to be partakers of a birth of which God by his Spirit is the author. That as by the first birth we have animal life, in the union of soul and body, and a cor-

rupt nature; so by a new or second birth we have spiritual life, and a divine nature. (Rom. vi. 13, and 2 Pet. i. 4).—

What does this imply? As through the union of soul and body we have animal or natural-life, and are alive to, and sensible of, the goods and evils, privations and enjoyments, belonging to this world; so by the union of our soul with God, we have spiritual life, and are alive to, and keenly sensible of, spiritual goods and evils, &c.—As to animal life belong animal senses, so to spiritual life spiritual senses. — To animal life belong animal appetites, to spiritual life spiritual appetites, an hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and after the supports or means of continuing the spiritual life, as prayer and praise, which are indeed the breathing of the soul born of God, the word of God, and all the means of grace.—The union of soul and body in the natural life implies natural faculties, as understanding, will, conscience, &c. These faculties are weakened and perverted, but by the new birth are renewed and invigorated.—Hence it appears that the being born of God is not merely a relative, (which is properly justification and adoption,) but rather a real change. Not an external but an internal change: not a partial but an universal; not a fleeting and transitory, but a continued and progressive change.—

It is wrought by the Spirit, (John iii. 5, 6,) by the Word, (1 Pet. i. 23,) by faith, (John i. 12, 13,) and in answer to prayer. — —

Consider we now,

II. THE GLORIOUS EFFECT PRODUCED.

Such “overcome the world.” He that is born of God

is born for God, and consequently for another world. He has a temper and disposition that leads him to aspire after an higher and better world. And he is furnished with arms whereby he can conquer this.

The world sometimes means the people of the world. In this sense of the expression we may observe, he that is born of God does not entertain their views and maxims:—is not actuated by their spirit, which is earthly, sensual, devilish:—is not enslaved to, or governed by, their habits and customs, does not walk in their vain and sinful ways; does not walk in a vain shadow, &c., much less in profaneness and immorality.

The world is rather here to be taken for the things of the world, especially such as are usually most esteemed and desired. Thus in ch. ii. 15. Instance—in riches and gains: he that is born of God overcomes the love of them. He does not esteem them beyond their true value. He knows they have no value in themselves, any more than common earth;—that their relative value is merely that they are the means of procuring things needful or convenient for this short life; that is, things which we shall not want, and cannot use long;—that they neither are nor can be our own, but that we are only stewards of them, and are and shall be accountable for our use of them;—that they often prove a great snare. (Matt. xiii.)

He does not desire them, save for these purposes; he does not trust in them to do more than they are intended to do; they will not afford him happiness or satisfaction; not continue with him, and not “take themselves wings and fly away;” he does not cleave to, or take delight in, them.—In honour, whether preferment, or applause. The former he knows is often attended with

danger, and the higher the rise the greater the fall; that every office is a trust, and has important duties annexed to it: that the higher the office the greater the trust and responsibility to God and man. As to respect and applause from men, he knows this is a very precarious and uncertain thing, and that men often praise ignorantly; that they who praise to-day may condemn to-morrow; who to-day say, "Hosanna," may to-morrow cry, "Crucify him," &c.: that it is a very dangerous snare, as almost always producing pride and high-mindedness, and so making God our enemy, "who resisteth the proud;" and as tending to draw men from seeking the favour and approbation of God above all things, and leading them to prefer the praise of men to the praise of God.—In pleasure, from the gratification of our senses, as sight; the child of God is not prohibited from beholding the wonderful works of his heavenly Father, or from receiving pleasure from the sight of them, and he receives more pleasure than the unregenerate, who know they have no interest in the peculiar favour, &c., of him whose works they view;—from hearing, conversation, music, &c.;—from agreeable and pleasant food; but the child of God so overcomes this pleasure, that he can be contented and happy without it;—from the gratification of our appetites; these the christian may indulge in moderation, and to sustain life, &c., but he overcomes temptation to excess in every respect, and will keep the body under, and "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;"—amusements, &c.; for these the christian has neither time nor inclination.

Those things of the world which are disagreeable and painful to nature, must also be included, such as poverty, dishonour, and affliction. The christian overcomes

even these, as to the fear of them. He knows they cannot happen to him without God's permission or appointment, who is wise, and just, and kind; that he will support him under them, deliver him out of them, and make them "work for his good."—To be more particular. As to losses and poverty. He knows that this is a much safer state than riches, because it tends to keep the soul humble, dead to the world, sober; that it was the lot of the Son of God, to whom it is an honour to be conformed, and has been the lot of God's children in general: that God is engaged to give him necessaries, (Matt. vi. 33,) and whatever will be best for him. (Psal. lxxxiv. 11.)—As to dishonour, as a mean and low situation in life: this also is more safe than a high station, for if we do not rise so high, we cannot fall so far; it tends to keep us humble. The trust committed to us, and the anxiety to fulfil it, is not so great. This also was the lot of Christ and of his followers in general.—Reproach is often given without reason, and may soon be changed into praise: it is an exercise of, and a means of increasing our faith and patience; it, as it were, compels us to seek and cleave to the honour that cometh from God; it reconciles us to, and makes us long for the second coming of Christ and the day of judgment, when every man's character will be set in a clear light. (Isai. xxv. 8.)—Affliction, pain, &c. Those who are born of God cannot escape these. (Heb. xii. 6—8.) But they bear them with resignation and patience, though not "joyous but grievous;" for they know they do not come by chance, but are the chastisements of a Father, trials of grace, and purifying fires: that they shall be supported under them, delivered out of

them, and even rewarded for them, if borne patiently. (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.)

Observe the certainty of all this. "Whatsoever" person that "is born of God," even the feeblest, "overcometh the world." Whatsoever thing or quality, as judgment, choice, intention, resolution, affection, that is from the Spirit of God, "overcometh," yea, riseth above, "the world." — —

III. THE GRAND MEANS, OR INSTRUMENT, OF THIS VICTORY.

"Our faith:" this is the armour whereby we overcome the world.—Faith in general. As it is the "evidence of things not seen," and has for its object the invisible world, its reality, and its importance, it enables us to overcome this visible world. As it has for its object, and looks at the eternal world, an endless duration of misery or happiness, (2 Cor. iv. 18,) it enables us to overcome, and rise above goods and evils that are only temporal, and but for a moment. — — As it is (*υποστασις*) the *basis, confidence* of receiving, and the *subsistence* "of things hoped for," opening before us, and giving us an anticipation of eternal felicity and glory, it enables us to overcome our attachment, and to die to the world, in which we have tribulation, and to bear tribulation with patience, knowing it is but for a moment. — —

To be more particular. Faith in the Son of God.—Believing him to be such, and the wisdom, word, truth, &c., incarnate, we must be persuaded of the certain truth and infinite importance of his doctrine, especially as it is sealed by his blood, miracles, &c.; and this hath brought to light, life, and immortality, and warned us

of our danger from the present world. — — Therefore by faith we see that this world is an enemy to our souls, and an hinderance to our salvation. For “all that is in the world,” &c. (1 John ii. 16.)—By faith in the spirit and conduct of the Lord Jesus, his holy and heavenly mind, &c., we learn that the world must be renounced and overcome, and we must live above it. Believing that the Lord Jesus hath conquered the world, not for himself only, but for his followers, we shall see that we must be partakers of his victory. (John xiv. 33.)—The sufferings and death of Christ, and the continual cross he bore on earth, teach and influence us to be crucified to the love of ease and pleasure; nay to sin, (Rom. vi. 4,) and to ourselves. (Gal. ii. 20.)—Faith shows us that one grand end of his incarnation, sufferings, &c., was to redeem us from this evil world, (Gal. i. 4,) and from our vain conversation. (1 Peter i. 18—20.)—We perceive in our redemption through him such a wonderful display of the love of God and Christ as may well gain our confidence, and win our affections, and draw our minds from all sublunary objects.—All true faith “works by love,” and of course expels the love of the world, and purifies the heart from its lusts.—It unites the soul to Christ, and makes us cleave to him, in opposition to the world.—It derives grace and strength from him for conquering the frowns and flatteries of the world.—In consequence of the promises of the Gospel, it contains a right to that indwelling Spirit which is greater than the spirit of the world. (John vii. 37, 38.)—It sees an invisible world at hand, with which this world is not worthy to be compared, and for which it shows us we should always be prepared. By it the soul is begotten again to a “lively hope of an in-

heritance" in heaven. (1 Pet. i. 3.)—It assures us that Jesus is gone to prepare a place for us, (John xiv. 2,) and will come and put an end to this world, &c.—By faith we obtain a spirit that cannot be satisfied with this world, but looks beyond it, and is striving and preparing for a better state. (2 Cor. v. 2.) "For if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor. xv. 19.)

Thus we see that the great principles of our divine religion, a sense of redeeming love, grace derived by faith from Christ, and the prospect of such sublime and perpetual happiness as the Gospel opens to our view, are sufficient to instruct and enable us to conquer and triumph over these transitory vanities, and render us superior to all the temptations from the world, where-with we can be assaulted.—And these only are sufficient. "For who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth." (Ver. 5.) Other principles are evidently insufficient, and the boasted triumphs of those who have built upon them have been very partial and imperfect; and while they have gloried in despising, or in conquering one vanity, they have evidently been subdued by another. Christianity alone, real christianity, affords its possessors universal empire; *it* only conquers this world, and gains another that is pure, and blessed, and eternal.

* * * *

CCLVII.

THE WATER AND THE BLOOD FROM JESUS
CHRIST.

1 JOHN v. 6.

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

[The subject may be introduced from the context, by adverting to the nature and importance of faith and its fruits.]

THERE is an allusion here to the fact recorded by St. John in his Gospel, (chap. xix. 34, 35,) a fact which he considered as very important. If understood literally, and as merely natural, it was a demonstration of Christ's death. It showed either that the pericardium and heart were both pierced, the water being from the former, and the blood from the latter; or that the cruor was beginning to be separated from the serum.* In this view it was a confutation of those ancient heretics, who affirmed, that Christ died only in appearance. It is of vast importance to the church his death should be proved.—But St. John rather speaks of it as a supernatural and emblematical event. The ancient christians considered the blood and water as signifying the two sacraments instituted by Christ, baptism and the Lord's supper. These are standing proofs of the truth of chris-

* See Hammond on John xix., Doddridge, and Pool's Synopsis Criticorum.

tianity; just as the passover among the Jews proved that their fathers had come out of Egypt, and the feast of tabernacles that they had lived in the wilderness in tents. Thus also the covenant of the old Law was confirmed by blood mixed with water. And a third testimony in this view is borne by the Spirit of prophecy and its accomplishment, and by the Spirit of miracles in Christ and his Apostles.—“The water” is considered by a great critic,* as signifying the testimony of water, or the testimony borne to Christ by John, in his baptism. For John, when baptizing, testified of him. (John i. 27, 28—31, 34; see also ver. 6, 7, 8; iii. 27, 29, 30.) Christ himself appealed to this testimony, John v. 32, 33, 35. And it could not be rejected by those to whom it was given, for all men held John as a prophet. Nor could the Pharisees deny that his testimony was from heaven. (Matt. xxi. 25.) In correspondence with this, “the blood” may signify his own testimony, sealed by his blood to this truth, that he was the son of God. Thus, (1 Tim. vi. 13,) he witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate, and (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64,) before the high priest, and for this confession he was put to death. (Ver. 66; Mark xiv. 61—65.) The Spirit also bore witness that he was the Messiah, by the many miraculous operations by him and his Apostles, (John v. 36, and in the Scriptures fulfilled so exactly in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, &c.— —The water, also, may mean his perfectly simple, pure, cleansing and refreshing doctrine, according to the representation of the Old Testament; (Deut. xxxii. 2; Ps. lxxii. 6; Isai. lli. 15; John xv. 3;) which was a still farther testimony that he was the Messiah: the blood the suf-

* Dr. Whitby.

ferings whereby he confirmed that doctrine. For though evidently true, it was necessary it should be thus confirmed. The Spirit bore witness by the prophecies of the ancient prophets, foretelling that doctrine, (Isai. lxi. 1—3,) and the sufferings whereby he was to confirm it, and the miraculous operations whereby he and his Apostles sanctioned that doctrine.—But more especially the water may be understood of his pure and spotless life, in which he hath set us an example, and as to which we must follow him. The blood then will signify his sufferings, with the fortitude and patience with which he sustained them, in which also he was our example. (See 1 Pet. ii. 19—21, iii. 1018; iv. 1—2—19.) In Christ we see that the greatest innocence, usefulness, holiness, and wisdom in a person's life cannot secure him from reproach and sufferings. And if they did these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? This seems to suit well with the context. For thus Christ proved himself to be “the Son of God,” and thus we must “overcome the world,” the baits or temptations of which are chiefly of two sorts, the allurements of wealth, honour, and pleasure, and the terrors arising from apprehensions of persecution in various forms and suffering.* The Spirit also testifies in this view; that is, the Spirit in the Prophets bore witness to the innocence and sufferings of Christ: (1 Pet. i. 11; Isai. liii. 7:) the same Spirit, descending as a dove on Christ, and abiding on him without measure, manifested that he was righteous, innocent, and holy: and, especially, the same Spirit given to his church, after his ascension, “convinced the world” that he was righ-

* See Hammond on John xix. 35, and on the text, where there is an excellent note.

teous, although he suffered, and that judgment would be executed on his betrayers and murderers. The purity of the lives of christians, and their sufferings, foretold by the ancient Prophets, through the Holy Ghost, may be included. (1 Pet. i. 11; Isai. viii. 18.) —

But what is most evidently, and above all, meant here is, that he came *as* by water, to wash and purify, and refresh, and render men fruitful in righteousness; *so* by blood to atone for and expiate our sins, and that the two grand blessings which we must look for from him are, justification by his blood, and sanctification by his grace. (1 Cor. vi. 11; Dan. ix. 24.)—We need the former. (Rom. iii. 10—18.) He came by blood to atone and justify. (John i. 29; Heb. ix. 11—14; 18—23, 24—28; Rom. iii. 23; iv. 25; 2 Cor. v. 21.) To this the Holy Spirit bore testimony in the ancient Prophets. (Isai. liii. 10, 11; Dan. ix. 24.) The Spirit in Christ and in the Apostles confirmed this by miracles, as in the passages before quoted. The Spirit seals this doctrine upon the hearts of the faithful, and they find redemption through his blood. (Rom. v. 6—10; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14.)—We stand in equal need of regeneration and sanctification. He came by water to wash and purify. This signifies the purifying Spirit, which proceeds from Christ. (John vii. 37, 38; iv. 10, 14; Isai. lv. 1.) Dr. Lightfoot says, that, according to the tradition of the Jewish Rabbins, when Moses smote the rock, there came forth first blood and then water. “That rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. x. 4.) See Zech. xiii. 1. The blood for sin to expiate it; the water for uncleanness to purge it away. This is the second great end of Christ’s coming, to sanctify. (Eph. v. 25, 27; Tit. ii. 14; iii. 5, 6; Ezek. xxxvi. 2 Cor. vii. 1; 1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Thess.

. 23.) To this also the Holy Spirit has borne testimony by the ancient Prophets, by the Apostles, and in the hearts of the faithful.—“Not by water only, but by water and blood.” Suppose we were washed or cleansed, and sanctified by the water, by the Holy Spirit, and were also refreshed and rendered fruitful for the present and future, this would be no abatement for, or exiation of, our past sin; nor would it obtain forgiveness for us; but atoning blood is necessary, “without which there is no remission.” (Heb. ix. 22.) Our sanctification by the water and our fruitfulness is never so perfect in this life as to be capable of bearing the scrutiny of divine justice, or the examination of his Law. Therefore it could not be accepted by an holy God, were it not sprinkled and recommended by the blood of atonement. Thus those who are washed have “need to wash their feet.” (John xiii. 10.) —

That Christ came by water and blood in the several respects which have been explained, and that the Spirit witnesses this, and “is truth,” will not avail us at all without—Serious consideration and belief of these things, so as to understand and lay them to heart, as not only true, but infinitely important.—Repentance towards God, since our fall and depravity was so great as to render such a provision, even the water and blood, absolutely necessary for our salvation.—Faith in the water and blood, in the testimony of John, of Christ, in the doctrine, life, sanctifying influences, in the sufferings, death, atoning blood, &c., of Christ, in order to peace with God and peace of conscience.—The blood and water, justification and sanctification, are not to be separated.—This faith must be accompanied with love to Jesus.—And must be followed by obedience.—

CCLVIII.

THE RECORD CONCERNING ETERNAL LIFE
IN THE SON OF GOD.

1 JOHN v. 11, 12.

This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

SINCE our Lord hath expressly declared, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," it certainly concerns us all seriously to examine ourselves whether we have faith; and if we would not deceive ourselves in this important matter, we should inquire whether we have those fruits which are ascribed to faith in the Oracles of God. Of these St. John gives us some account in the verses preceding our text, and if we compare our hearts and lives with what he there declares, we may, without much difficulty, form a true judgment of our own state. For if, upon examination, we find that "we are *born of God*," (that is, have undergone a real and manifest change, such as every child undergoes when born into the world,) that we "love God," that we "love the children of God," that, from a principle of love, "we keep the commandments of God,"—keep them, however contrary to the interests of flesh and blood, and that not with reluctance but delight;—(for according to this Apostle, "his commandments are not grievous to a believing, loving heart;) and above all, if we find that we "over-

come the world," being superior to its allurements and temptations, and finding our happiness only in God; then may we be assured that we are indeed in the faith, and have a title to everlasting life: but if these marks are not found in us, we are not in the faith, but "the wrath of God abideth on us."

But who or what is the object of this faith? The Apostle tells us. It is Jesus Christ, who "came by water and blood;" "not by *water only*," as the Socinians say, "but by water and blood." He was not only baptized with water, (an emblem of his spotless purity,) and undertook to fulfil all righteousness, which he also performed, leaving us an example that we should tread in his steps; but he also came by blood, which he shed not only or chiefly to seal the truth of his doctrine, but also and especially to make atonement for the sins of mankind: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness in and by the Scripture, and his witness may be depended upon, "because the Spirit is truth."

For "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." The Father bore record to Christ when there came a voice from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." "The Word," our Lord Jesus Christ, often bore record of himself in the days of his flesh. "I am one," says he, "who bear testimony of myself." And the Holy Spirit of God bore testimony to him, when he descended upon him in the form of a dove at his baptism, and afterwards wrought miracles by the man Christ Jesus and by his Apostles. —The Apostle adds, "And these three are one," the word is not, (*εἰς*) *one person*, but (*εἰς*) *one thing*, denoting their perfect and indissoluble union in one and the

same Godhead.—Now, answerable to these, there are three that bear witness on earth; “the Spirit,” in and by the Prophets and Apostles, “the water” of baptism, a standing emblem of sanctifying grace, and “the blood,” the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, which shews forth the Lord’s death till he comes; “and these three agree in one;” they agree, as it were, in bearing one and the same testimony, that there is salvation in Christ, and in none other.

“Now if we receive the witness of men,” as we do on a thousand occasions, and must do if we would transact any business, or enjoy any comfort among men, “the witness of God is greater;” more to be valued, more to be depended upon. For “this is the witness of God;” this testimony of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, “is the witness,” not of man, but “of God,” which he hath testified of his Son. “He that believeth on the Son of God,” that “believeth with his heart unto righteousness,” hath (την μαρτυριαν) not *a* witness, but “*the* witness” (may I not say, the ’forementioned six-fold witness?) “in himself.”—He hath the witness of the Father in himself: the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath lifted up upon him the light of his countenance, and hath hereby put joy and gladness into his heart. He hath the witness of the Word in himself; Christ dwelleth in his heart by faith, and is precious unto his soul. He hath the witness of the Holy Ghost in himself, for the Spirit of adoption crieth in his heart, “Abba, Father, and beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God,” producing love, joy and peace, and all his other blessed graces. Again, he hath the witness of the Spirit (the Scriptures inspired by the

spirit,) in himself; for he frequently tastes the good word of God, and his soul is nourished thereby. He hath the witness of the water in himself: as he himself has been baptized with water, and has received "the outward and visible sign," so has he received the thing signified thereby, even the "inward and spiritual grace; a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." And he has the witness of the blood in himself; for as he takes all opportunities of commemorating his Lord's death and passion, by eating that bread and drinking that cup, so the bread which he eats is to him "the communion of the body of Christ," and the wine which he drinks is to him "the communion of his blood."

Hence, however strange it may appear, "he that believeth on the Son of God hath" even a six-fold "witness in himself." On the other hand, "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar;" not absolutely, because as God cannot lie, so no man can make him a liar. But the meaning is, he hath done what he can to make God a liar, he hath acted as if he thought God were a liar, yea, he says by his conduct, God is a liar, and I will not believe him, "because he believeth not the record that God hath given of his Son."

But, after all, what is this record? What is it which the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; which the spirit, the water, and the blood bear their joint and several testimonies to? "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." And this is the record,—

That God hath given to us eternal life,—That this life is in his Son; and, which is a consequence of these, —That he who hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

It is impossible to conceive any thing capable of being

introduced with more solemnity, than that wherewith the Apostle introduces these three great and blessed truths in my text. He summons up, as it were, six witnesses, three in heaven and three on earth, to give their joint and several testimonies to them; and no wonder, for they are of the deepest importance to every child of man: they are the very essence of christianity, and the sum and substance of all those truths in the oracles of God which concern our salvation. Let us, therefore, consider them with that seriousness which their importance demands, taking them in the order in which they lie. And,

I. GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE.

By "eternal life" here, we are to understand both the happiness of heaven, and the grace given us on earth to prepare us for it. And in this sense the expression is frequently used in Scripture, especially in the writings of this Apostle; as where he says, "He that believeth hath everlasting life," hath grace in possession, and glory in prospect; and where our Lord affirms that it is *eternal life*, i. e., glory begun in grace, or grace growing up into glory, to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Now in my text, when the Apostle saith, "God hath given to us eternal life," if we understand him as speaking of all mankind, then by the Word "given" he means *offered*, God hath sincerely and freely offered to us, that is to mankind in general, "eternal life;" even grace, saving grace here, and eternal glory hereafter. I say *sincerely* offered, for far be it from the God of truth to mock his helpless creatures with a delusive offer, which he either never intended they should accept, or knew it was not in

their power to accept: and I say *freely* offered, because this grace and glory are in no respect deserved by us, but are gratuitously bestowed by God. And I conceive both these assertions are fully proved by that one scripture, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely;" (*δωρεαν*;) *by a free gift*; not deserved by him, but bestowed by me.

But, perhaps, we are rather to understand the Apostle as speaking of believers only, and then the word "given" is to be taken in its proper and ordinary meaning: "God hath given to us," hath actually bestowed upon us, "eternal life;" that is, as hath been explained above, grace and glory.—That God hath bestowed grace, even saving grace, upon true believers, will be readily allowed; because otherwise they could not truly believe, all true faith being itself of the operation of God, and being also always preceded by repentance unto life, accompanied by the new birth, and followed by universal holiness, which are all wrought in us by the Holy Spirit of God. But it may be doubted whether it can with any propriety be said that God hath given us eternal glory, while we are still exiles in this foreign land. Yet there is a sense in which even this may be properly affirmed; for God hath given us, if we have living faith, a title to it, a meetness for it, and a foretaste of it.

I observe, first, God hath given us a title to it. For being convinced of sin by the Spirit of God, and brought to true repentance, being convinced of righteousness, and enabled to believe on the Lord Jesus with a "faith that worketh by love;" we are "in Christ," and therefore, according to St. Paul, are freed from condemna-

tion. Having believed on Christ, we are "justified by the faith of Christ;" are "justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses," or by the merit of our own works: we are acquitted from the guilt of all sin, are delivered from the curse of a broken law, and are taken into favour with God. Hence it is, that whatever our state might be before we believed, though we might be then (which we certainly were,) as truly exposed to eternal death as ever a condemned criminal was exposed to a temporal one, yet being now freely and fully forgiven, we are no longer liable to be punished in hell for our past sins, any more than a criminal whom the king has pardoned is liable to execution. Nay further, having received Christ Jesus the Lord in all his offices, as he is set forth in the Scriptures, we have obtained the privilege of "becoming the children of God," which privilege is bestowed upon all that believe in his name;" and being children, we are in consequence "heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," and are therefore as entirely entitled to the heavenly inheritance as was our Lord Jesus Christ himself, our living head, being his brethren, yea, "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bone."

It was observed, also, that God hath given us a meetness for this eternal life: not indeed a complete and perfect, but a growing meetness, which seems to have been the meaning of St. Paul, where he thanks God on behalf of the church at Colosse, that he "had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light." For we cannot reasonably suppose they were all matured and perfected in grace; no, some of them were probably no more than "babes in Christ," others "young men," and others again "fathers."

Nevertheless they were all in a measure holy; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." They were delivered from the power even of inward sin, were influenced by the love, and devoted to the service of God; and persevering in grace, would in due time be sanctified wholly in body, soul, and spirit," and "filled with all the fulness of God." And the very same is still the character of every child of God, of every true believer that lives up to his privileges. 'The "seed" of God "remaineth in him, and he cannot sin;" he "keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." He "abideth in Christ, and bringeth forth fruit," the fruits of the Spirit, in his heart, love, joy, peace, holiness, and happiness—a preparation for, and an earnest of heaven.

This leads to the third observation, which was, that God hath given his children not only a title to, and a growing meetness for, but even a foretaste for heaven. This, I apprehend, is the principal thing intended in this clause of my text, as also in the two other passages of Scripture above quoted. For when John the Baptist saith, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," and when our Lord says, "This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," they both mean, as the Apostle does in my text, that the children of God enjoy a measure of heaven upon earth, and have in grace a foretaste of glory. And that this should be the case we need not wonder; because as their happiness in the future state will chiefly consist, not in a freedom from bodily pains and infirmities, an exemption from the calamities of life, or the society of saints and angels; no,

nor in any external advantages, as to honour or felicity, to which they will be admitted in that "new heaven and new earth," but in the most clear knowledge, fervent love, and perfect enjoyment of God; so possessing all these in some measure in this world, they must be proportionably happy here, and that with the very same kind of happiness wherewith they shall be happy hereafter. The difference is only in degree. Their knowledge of God will be more clear and immediate, their love to him more perfect and satisfying, and their enjoyment of him more beatifying and complete. And in consequence hereof, their happiness, arising from these sources, will be greater; but in kind it is the same, since it proceeds from the same causes, and is directed to the same ends; so that, as Dr. Watts says,

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below:
Celestial fruit on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow."

While in this wilderness, they taste the very grapes of Canaan, and eat heavenly manna, angel's food, plentifully scattered round about their tents. The Gospel of Christ, like Moses' rod, has once smote their rocky hearts, and opened within them that very well of water which will spring up to everlasting life. The water is the same, only it will exist in a greater abundance hereafter, the bubbling fountain being swollen into a mighty river, and the river into a boundless ocean.

And now, before we yield to the impulse of gratitude, and join the Apostle in solemnly thanking God for his unspeakable gift, the gift of eternal life, let us recollect that we are sinful creatures, who have broken all the laws of God, trampled under foot the authority

of the Lawgiver, and rebelled against the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, and let us see whether the inviolable justice of this dread Sovereign, and the rights of his injured government will permit him, (if I may so express myself,) to confer such an immense blessing upon such guilty wretches. And thus shall I be led to the next general head of discourse, which was to consider,

II. HOW THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON.

Though it is evident that this life, this eternal life, could not be in our Lord Jesus Christ, if he was not, in his complex person, God as well as man, inhabited by the fulness of Deity, and strictly and properly "God manifest in the flesh;" yet in this and other passages of Scripture, where he is particularly considered as "Mediator between God and man," his human nature seems especially to be intended, though not as separated from the divine, but united to, supported and influenced by, the indwelling Godhead.—This being observed, when the Apostle says in my text, "God hath given to us eternal life," and "this life is in his Son," he intends both to endear the blessing to us, by informing us it comes through his hands who died in our stead, and also to encourage our confidence in applying for it, assuring us it is in the possession, not of absolute Deity, but of Deity in union with manhood, who is at once (such is his condescending love!) our kinsman and our brother, nay, our very flesh and blood. And at the same time he may be considered as reminding us of our guilt and depravity, which is so great, that even the infinite mercy and love of God could not, in a way consistent with his governing justice, confer this blessing upon us but

through a Mediator, who must both make atonement for our sins and daily intercede for our persons, otherwise we could not be made partakers of this eternal life.

To be a little more particular. When the Apostle says, "This life is in his Son," he means, first, that it hath been procured for us by his Son. The Lord Jesus Christ, by his obedience unto death, hath so fully satisfied all the demands of infinite justice, to which we stood indebted, hath so "magnified the law," which we had broken, and hath so vindicated and asserted all the rights of God's moral government which we had insulted, that, guilty, and depraved as we are, we may, in the way of repentance and faith, come unto God with confidence, and claim this eternal life, without fearing a rebuke from the Supreme Majesty. God can now be "just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." For though by sin we have forfeited all right and title to this life, and have contracted an immense and incalculable debt to the justice of God, which ten thousand ages, if so many could be passed in unsinning obedience, would not enable us to discharge, yet has the Son of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," by "one offering of himself once made," so discharged our whole debt, that God is, I will not say "merciful and gracious," but, "faithful and just to forgive us our sins," and remitting our obligation to punishment, to give us back our forfeited title to life and happiness. And hence, though the best of us cannot plead we never sinned, nor sue for eternal life on the footing of our own obedience, yet may the worst of us acknowledge our sins, and put in our claim on the foundation of his atonement and intercession. And for our encouragement, let us be assur-

ed they are of infinite and everlasting efficacy before the throne of God, rendering that a throne of mild grace and goodness, which had otherwise remained a throne of stern justice, whence the guilty could obtain nothing but wrath and fiery indignation.

We observe, secondly, that when St. John says "this life is in his Son," he means, that as the Son of God hath procured it, so hath he taken possession of it, and that for us, in our name, and in our stead. Having "ascended up on high, he hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Such is the language of David, and St. Paul; (Eph. iv. 8;) and to the same purport is the testimony of St. Peter, (Acts. ii. 33,) Christ "being exalted by the right hand of God, hath received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." Now this Holy Spirit which Christ hath received for us, dwelling in us here, and preparing us for glory hereafter, is the very essence of eternal life. And not only hath he taken possession of the life of grace for us, but also of the life of glory; for as our "Forerunner," he is, as the Apostle testifies, "entered into heaven for us;" and the end for which he hath entered he himself hath informed us, "I go to prepare a place for you," and "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also."

Now as this life is in God's Son, possessed by him, and treasured up in him; in other words, as he is "full of truth and grace," so must we, dead sinners, "come to him that we may have life," that "out of his fulness we may all receive. and grace for grace." This is the third thing St. John seems to have meant by this expression; he meant to acquaint us, that as this life is in

Christ, so must we apply to him for it: that if we thirst, we must "come to him and drink," he being able, and he alone, to supply our wants, and satisfy our desires; for there is salvation in no other, for "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Let us, therefore, if we "know the gift of God," and who he is in whose hands this gift is lodged, "ask of him, and he will give us living water," which "shall be in us a well of water springing up to everlasting life."

And now, my brethren, let us stop a moment and adore that immense, that unsearchable goodness of God, which, when our sins had justly merited eternal death, graciously forgives those sins, and, treating us better than we could have expected, though we had never offended, makes us a deed of gift, as it were; the gift of eternal life!—And because the purity of his unspotted nature, and the rectitude of his government, guarded as with a flaming sword this tree of life, and forbade such guilty wretches to approach it, was graciously pleased to provide an atonement and propitiation, that the demands of justice might be answered, and a way opened again for us into paradise. Further, because a sacrifice less costly would not have been sufficient to expiate the guilt of the whole human race, and also that he might give a demonstration of his love, as astonishing as it is divine, he, "spared not his own," his "only begotten Son," in "whom he was" always "well pleased," and rested with unutterable delight, but "freely delivered him up for us all;" and to what death he delivered him you well know. Again, because he knew our guilt had made us suspicious, and that we were ever prone to call his love in question, and to distrust his goodness,

he not only gives us his Son, as a pledge of that eternal life he hath promised to all believers, but he hath put this eternal life into his hands, who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and who is a day's-man, or Mediator, between him and us. For "as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself:" behold he is "come that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly."—Which leads us to consider,

III. HE THAT HATH THE SON HATH LIFE, AND HE THAT HATH NOT THE SON OF GOD HATH NOT LIFE.

This follows by plain consequence from the preceding propositions, and is a truth of such absolute certainty and deep importance, that no child of man, who would not throw away his salvation, is at liberty to contradict or overlook it.—But what is it, to have the Son of God? It is, first, to have an interest in him so as to be able to say Christ is mine. For as a woman hath an interest in the man, to whom she is legally married, and can say, This man is mine, is my husband; so true believers, being "dead to the law by the body of Christ" offered up for them, are "married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead," and can say "My beloved is mine;" My "Maker is my husband." Again, it is to have union and communion with him. For as a wife is united in love to her husband, and has intimate fellowship with him, so is the christian closely united to the Lord Jesus, and has sweet "fellowship with the Father and with the Son." Hence our Lord compares himself to the vine, and his people to the branches; and signifies that our union with him is as near and as intimate as that between a natural tree and its branches;

and the Apostle speaks of "Christ in us the hope of glory," and declares that "Christ is in you, except ye are reprobates." Once more; "he that hath the Son" implies the having a conformity to the Son, the having the "mind that was in Christ Jesus," and "walking as Christ also walked." And this particular cannot be separated from the former. For as he that has an interest in Christ, and belongs to him, is united to him, and Christ "dwells in his heart;" so he that has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him, has also in the same proportion the fruits of the Spirit.

He then that hath the Son in these three senses, that hath an interest in him, union with him, and (more or less, in proportion to his faith and love) a conformity to him, whatever he may be supposed to want,—though he may want knowledge, and be unacquainted with and even mistaken in many things; though he may be poor and mean as well as ignorant, and very unable to do much, or almost any good to the bodies or souls of men; nay, though in time past he might have been a vicious sinner, and enslaved to all manner of vice;—yet, being "in Christ a new creature," he "hath the Son," and therefore "hath life." "There is no condemnation to him," for what is past: he is at present in favour with God; nay, he has obtained the privilege of becoming his child, and, being a child of God, is indeed an heir of glory. For this glory God is preparing him, and even gives him an earnest of it in his heart. In a word, having "believed on the Son of God with his heart unto righteousness," he hath everlasting life. I say, having *believed* on the Son of God, for it appears, as from a thousand other passages, so especially from the verse immediately following our text, that Christ himself and

this great salvation become ours by faith. For “these things,” saith the Apostle, “have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”—The whole matter, therefore, turns upon this one point, on our *believing on the Son of God*. Being convinced of sin by the Spirit of God, and brought to true repentance, we must believe with a lively faith that Christ hath been “delivered” unto death “for our offences,” whereby he hath atoned for them, and “raised from the dead for our justification,” whereby we are assured that his atonement is accepted, and that he “ever liveth at the right hand of God,” where also “he maketh intercession for us:” we must come to him with fervent desire, and trust in him with unfeigned confidence, persuaded that there is salvation in no other, and that he is both able and willing “to save to the uttermost;”—in fine, we must “lay hold on eternal life;” this grace, this glory offered to us through him; must “take of this water of life,” given to us freely; and thus shall Christ and his salvation be made over to us, and “the water that he will give us shall be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Now let me apply this in the language of the Apostle. “These things have I spoken unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” Do you believe on the Son of God? Do you believe he “hath loved you, and given himself for you?” That he hath made atonement for your sins, and that the Father hath graciously accepted and is well pleased with his atonement? Do you trust in him alone for salvation? and do you embrace the pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace of God offered to you through him?

Does your "faith work by love?" and does your love show itself by obedience? Then let your doubts and fears be dispelled, and be assured, on the infallible testimony of the Word of God, as well as by the witness of the Spirit of God, that you have everlasting life: you have even now a title to it, God is preparing you for it, and ere long he will give you the full enjoyment of it; only you must *continue* to believe, as the Apostle exhorts in the same verse. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know, &c., and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Do you now believe? Then you have eternal life. Continue to believe, and you shall continue to enjoy this great privilege. For "the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul," says God, "shall have no pleasure in him."

But I must also give you the counterpart of this. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." He that hath not the Son of God; that is, according to what was said above, he that hath not an interest in him, that cannot say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his:" he that hath not union with him, that cannot say, "Christ liveth in me;" he that hath not a conformity to him, that is not in some measure restored to his likeness; whatever he may have beside,—though he have much knowledge in the things of God, and his religious principles be sound and orthodox,—though his moral character be very good, and his conduct unblameable,—yea, though he attend all the ordinances of God, and abound in many good works,—yet as he "hath not the Son of God, he hath not life." He has no title to heaven, no preparation for it, no foretaste of it: on the contrary, he "is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

With an application of this I have done. These things have I spoken unto you that believe not on the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal death!—Eternal death! God forbid.—What! would you send us all to hell, who do not think as you think? No, no more than I would send all those to heaven, who do think as I think. But I hope you don't imagine that the point in question now is a matter of mere opinion. No: it is the very essence of religion, the life and soul of christianity, all short of which is no more than a mere shadow. It is a point of no less importance than, whether we have the Son of God? And what I affirm, is only what St. John hath affirmed before me, that those who have him not have not life, and, of consequence, have death, even death everlasting. Observe, I don't say you are predestinated, adjudged or consigned over to death everlasting. I only say, you have it, even in the same sense in which the child of God has eternal life. He has a title to the one, and you are obnoxious to the other. God is fitting him for the one, and the devil is fitting you for the other. He has hold on heaven, and heaven is in his heart; and you have hold on hell, and hell is in your heart. For as love, joy, and peace, holiness and happiness, are no other than the kingdom of God within him, and heaven brought down from above; so guilt, fear, and cares, wrath, malice, and envy, sin and misery, are no less than the kingdom of darkness within you, and hell brought up from beneath; they are the flames of eternal fire kindling upon thy unholy soul.—Do not say, “This cannot be, for I have many good qualities;—I do no harm—I do much good—I go to church and sacrament—I read the Scriptures, and pray in private.” I allow it: but amidst all

these excellencies, "yet lackest thou one thing," and that so necessary, that all without it is a mere nothing: thou lackest Christ, and therefore lackest salvation; for "there is salvation in no other:"—thou lackest life, even the life of God in thy soul, and therefore thy whole religion is but a mere carcase. I grant indeed, that the carcase is comely, beautiful, and well dressed, yet still it is no more than a carcase, and therefore with all its ornaments and endowments, which cannot preserve it, must be buried in "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Deplorable, however, as this case is, there is one favourable circumstance in it, and a blessed one that is indeed! Thou art not yet delivered over to those eternal burnings; thou art still in the land of the living, and while there is life there is hope. The great gulf is not yet fixed; the decree is not yet made; but thou art still within the reach of mercy, and mercy is still within thy reach. Thou art still at liberty to pass from death unto life. God the Father still "waiteth to be gracious" to his own offspring: Christ still prays for the purchase of his blood: and the Holy Spirit still strives to take possession of his temple. O! be thankful for this inestimable blessing, and reject not the counsel of God against thyself. Do not refuse this precious gift; do not thrust eternal life from thee. "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart." Continue not in sin; nor in unbelief. But, forsaking all known sin, with shame and sorrow, and confessing thy desert of everlasting condemnation and wrath, come as a lost sinner to the only Saviour, and cast thy guilty soul on his atonement and intercession. And as sure as he is full of truth and grace, and as sure as thou believest on him

“with thy heart unto righteousness,” so sure shalt thou have “life through his name,” and “receive out of his fulness grace for grace.”

CCLIX.

THE CHRISTIAN CAUTIONED AGAINST
LEAVING HIS FIRST LOVE.

REVELATION ii. 4.

I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

It is a general observation, that few retain that warmth of love, and zeal in religion which they experience on their first setting out in the ways of God. And the observation is founded in truth. Many have lost their first love, who do not suppose they have, and consequently not seeking with all their hearts to recover it, they both displease God, and make no progress in religion. The text considered in connexion with the context, shows the propriety of these remarks.—Consider,

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE “FIRST LOVE” HERE SPOKEN OF.

It is the love consequent upon our espousals to Christ, (Rom. vii. 4,) productive of an interest in him, and union with him. Previous to this, we may esteem and desire him, but only then can we delight in him; implying acquiescence, joy, sympathy, tenderness.—The fruits of this love will be, zeal for his glory, resignation to, and acquiescence in his will; obedience to

his commands; imitation of his example; love to his people, word, and ordinances; hatred to sin, and deadness to the world; tenderness of conscience, watchfulness, and circumspection in all our behaviour. —

II. WHEN IT MAY BE SAID A MAN HAS LEFT THIS LOVE, AND HOW IT IS GENERALLY LEFT.

However regular in outward things, if yet a man has not that delight in the Lord he once had, nor that degree of zeal for his glory, &c., he has left this love.—The steps whereby it is frequently left are the indulgence of unbelief, presumption, pride, anger, or any other wrong temper, allowed and unrepented of; the love of the world; too much worldly business, and worldly cares; formality in the means of grace, or neglecting the means, especially secret prayer, the word heard, read, considered, self-examination, meeting with God's people, self-denial, watchfulness; misuse of our time; misemploying our talents; neglecting to do good as we have opportunity and ability. —

III. THE SIN, FOLLY, AND DANGEROUS SITUATION OF THOSE THAT HAVE LEFT THEIR FIRST LOVE.

For a child to lose his love for a kind father; for the affections of a wife to be alienated from an indulgent husband, is no small crime. In what terms then must we speak of the sin of those, who relinquish their love to their Saviour?—It is foolish, because to lose this love is to lose our happiness as well as holiness. If a wife loses her love to her husband, she loses all the happiness of such a relation.—The danger of such a state is great. Such have begun to backslide, and who knows when they will stop? They generally fall lower and lower, till there is little hope of their safety. —

AS to THE NECESSITY OF RECOVERING THIS FIRST LOVE. If we do not recover it, we cannot please the Lord; cannot grow in grace; the Lord will “come as a thief,” and “remove our candlestick out of its place.” (Ver. 5.) — —

TO RECOVER IT, we must remember from whence we have fallen; “repent and do our first works.” — —

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CCLX.

THE FAITHFUL AND PERSEVERING CHRISTIAN REWARDED.

(ESPECIALLY ADDRESSED TO MINISTERS.)

REVELATION ii. 10.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

PRECEPT and promise, duty and reward, labour and fruit crowning that labour, are continually represented in Scripture as being closely connected together, and going hand in hand. It is true, God is the author of all our mercies, and “every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights;” nor can we have “any thing unless it be given us from above;” and, in particular, eternal life and the rewards of it are “the gift of God.” Nevertheless, he must read the holy Scriptures very inattentively, who does not see, that whether we would be in a state of acceptance with God here, or enter his kingdom hereafter; whether we would be members of the church militant or triumphant; certain *means* are to be used in order to these ends,

and certain *conditions* are to be complied with, that the privileges and blessings which we desire and expect may be ours. We must seek that we may find, must strive that we may enter in, must sow that we may reap, must fight that we may conquer, must run that we may obtain the prize: or, in the language of our text, must be faithful unto death, that we may obtain the crown of life.

These words, you will recollect, are taken from the second of those seven letters sent to the seven churches of Asia, and addressed to the angels, or presiding elders in them. It is remarkable that in all these epistles our Lord pursues one and the same plan. He first assumes a glorious title to himself, adapted to the state and character of the church which he addresses; *i. e.* such as was fitted to produce conviction, to beget fear and concern, or hope and joy, and especially to inspire zeal and courage. He then describes the state and character of the church which he addresses, or the angel thereof. Then he gives reproof or encouragement, as was most needful; and, lastly, subjoins an animating promise “to him that overcometh.” For in all these letters one thing is peculiar, christianity is represented as a state of warfare, and the christian as a soldier, who must “put on the whole armour of God;” must fight and conquer before he can be crowned. Thus,—“Unto the angel of the church of Smyrna,” &c. (Ver. 8—10.) Consider here,

I. THE INJUNCTION, OR CHARGE, GIVEN.

To be “faithful,” sometimes means to be believing; being opposed to the being faithless, or unbelieving.—Thus our Lord to Thomas, (John xx. 27,) “Be not faith-

less, but believing;" (*με γινεσθαι πιστος αλλα πιστος*;) the very word here used in the original. To be faithful in this sense, is the foundation of being faithful in every other, and is of the utmost importance. It implies,—that we have faith, a rational and well-informed faith, in Divine revelation, on the evidences by which its truth is supported;—in the great truths declared in that revelation, so as to be fully persuaded of their certainty and importance, and deeply impressed, and continually influenced by them:—especially in those truths that respect the person and offices, undertaking and process of Christ, and the way of salvation through him; so that, being penitent, we apply to, and confide in him alone for salvation:—in the Gospel and its promises, or in the glad tidings of salvation, justification, sanctification, and eternal life through him; so as to be actually justified, regenerated, and saved by this faith, saved even here. —

As to draw back from this faith, whereby "the just live," is to be unfaithful to the grace of God, and to neglect or abuse it; so the faithfulness here spoken of implies, that we hold fast this faith, as St. Paul speaks, (1 Tim. i. 19,) and together therewith, "a good conscience;" that we "hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." (1 Tim. iii. 9.) By this faith, which has Divine revelation and its truths for its object, the conscience is *enlightened*: as it has for its object the law of God, and the awful penalties thereof, the conscience is *awakened*: so by faith in Christ, his atonement, &c., the conscience is *pacified*. And since this faith "worketh by love," that is, through love produces all obedience, it is always accompanied with "a conscience void of offence," &c.; so that faith and a good conscience cannot

be separated, and to be faithful, as expressed in my text, implies retaining them both, and not "making shipwreck." (1 Tim. i. 19.)

Having this faith and a good conscience, we are not only reconciled to God, and have peace with him, but we are made the friends of Christ. (John xv. 14, 15.) This leads us to speak of another sense in which we are called to "be faithful." We must be faithful to him as his *friend*. A person that is faithful to his friend will maintain his attachment to him, though he may be in adversity, reproach, and under the greatest sufferings: he will not see his character aspersed, or his person or property injured, without resenting the injury, and defending his friend to the uttermost of his power. So the faithful friends of Christ preserve their attachment to him, to his truth, his cause, his ways, and people, and cannot tamely see them misrepresented, reproached, and injured; at least without standing up in their defence.

Believers, are also the *spouse* of Christ; "the bride, the Lamb's wife;" and in this character also must be faithful. A wife is faithful to her husband when she abides by her engagements, and preserves the purity of her body, being faithful to his bed; and the purity of her mind, continuing to give her husband her affections in preference to all others. And we are, in this respect, faithful to Christ, when we keep his laws, and stand clear of spiritual adultery, neither suffering the world nor sin to gain dominion over us, and cause us to violate our engagements to him; and when we continue in his love, and give our hearts, our whole hearts, to him, in preference to every creature. And as a woman forsaketh father and mother, to cleave to her hus-

band, so we forsake all persons and things to cleave to Christ.

But we are also his *servants*, and must be faithful in that character. The faithfulness of a servant consists—in his executing faithfully his master's command;—his being attached to, and concerned for, his master's interest and honour;—his laying himself out to promote them to the uttermost of his power. Thus the servants of Christ must faithfully execute his commands;—have his interest at heart above all other considerations;—must willingly and diligently lay themselves out to promote it, employing faithfully all their time and talents, all their ability of body and mind, &c., for this purpose.

For they stand to him also in the relation of *stewards*. (Matt. xxv. 14; Luke xvi. 10—13.) He has intrusted with us “his goods;” various abilities wherewith we may be useful: to one he has given ten talents, to another five, &c.; and we must “occupy till he come;” must use and employ them for his glory and the interest of his kingdom: as the senses and members of our bodies, the faculties of our souls; our knowledge, wisdom, authority, our money, time, &c. To “be faithful,” in this sense, implies—that we do not judge these talents to be our own, and at our own disposal; but that we are only stewards of them, and must account for the use of them:—that we neither waste, nor employ for a bad purpose, our Lord's money, nor bury it in the earth of wordly cares, &c., nor hide it in the napkin of sloth, nor suffer it to contract rust; but employ it faithfully and diligently for the Lord, who hath intrusted us with it. And this must be our practice, whatever opposition or discouragements we meet with—For,

We are also his *soldiers*, and as such must be faith-

ful. (See Rev. xvii. 14.) At our baptism, when we professed to enlist into his army, and more especially when we actually enlisted, and entered into covenant with him, and every time we renewed that covenant at the Lord's supper, (therefore termed a sacrament because of the *oath* we take, as it were, to our commander,) we promise to renounce, and be at war with, all his enemies, to be true to our colours, to fight under his banner, &c. — — A faithful soldier—does not go over to the enemy—does not desert—does not shrink back through cowardice in the day of battle, or in time of danger—does not deceive the confidence which his general reposes in him. Thus Christ's soldiers love not their lives unto death, (Mark viii. 34, 35; Matt. x. 37: Luke xiv. 26,) but are made willing to forsake even their own lives.— —

All this is applicable to private christians; but especially to those called by Christ to the work of the ministry. These, above all others, are bound to have *faith*; —to “hold fast faith and a good conscience,” (1 Tim. iii. 9;)—to be the faithful friends and spouse of Christ; (the twelve being chiefly addressed John xv. 11;)—his servants, wholly employed in his work, and not as hirelings, but as household servants, (*οικεται*,) yea sons, under peculiar engagements;—his stewards; not only intrusted with various talents, but his “mysteries:” (1 Cor. iv. 1;) and it is especially “required of such stewards that a man be found faithful;” (ver. 2;) intrusted also with the care of the souls of men, to feed and oversee the flock of Christ.—To be a little more particular. They are entrusted, as St. Paul says, with the deposit, (*την παρακαταθεσιν*, 1 Tim. vi 20,)* “*the good thing*,”

*According to Philo and Josephus, the *soul* and the *law* are in

την καλὴν παρακαταθήκην, 2 Tim. i. 14,) “the form of sound words,” “the truth as it is in Jesus,” “the word of the truth of the Gospel,” the grand and leading doctrines, “the faith once delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3.) These they must keep, (ἔχει, 2 Tim. i. 13,) *retain* in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. These they must “*guard*,” (φυλάξον, 1 Tim. vi. 20; 2 Tim. i. 14,) must defend them against all opposers, that they may remain with the church of Christ *whole* and *undefiled*. And these they must “commit to faithful men, who can teach others, (2 Tim. ii. 2,) and who may “keep,” “guard,” and transmit them as they have done.—They must be faithful in bearing testimony to these doctrines. Thus Jesus Christ who “came into the world to bear witness to the truth,” “witnessed a good confession.” (John xviii. 37; 1 Tim. vi. 13.) Thus was Antipas Christ’s “faithful witness,” (μαρτυς, Rev. ii. 13.)—They must not keep back any doctrine “that would be profitable,” or precept, or promise, or threatening: must not shun to declare all the counsel of God:” (Acts xx. 20, 27:) must instruct, “convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering doctrine.” (2 Tim. iv. 2; see Gr.)—They must do this without respect of persons; and that not only in public but in private; “teaching every man and warning every man.” (Col. i. 28.)—In short, they must “take heed to themselves,” as to their faith, experience, and practice; and “to their doctrine,” that it be true, important, and suited to the state of their hearers. This faithfulness to themselves, to the people, and to Christ, requires that they “take heed to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them over-
different views called God’s deposit; (παραθήκην;) the soul to be returned into the hands of God. and the law to be kept sacred.

seers," &c.; (Acts xx. 28;) inquiring into their knowledge, experience, practice, and watching over them, "watching for their souls." (Heb. xiii. 17.) "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household:—blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing," &c.—(Matt. xxiv. 45.) For,

This faithfulness, whether of private christians or public ministers, must be continued till death; till Christ come. "That which you have already hold fast till I come. (Rev. ii. 25.) "Behold, I come quickly." (Rev. iii. 11.) We must continue in our attachment to him as his friends and spouse, must not relinquish or be weary of our work as his servants and stewards; must have on the whole armour of God, and stand firm in "the evil day" as his soldiers, and "having done all, stand." — To animate us to this steadfastness and perseverance, we have,

II. A GRACIOUS PROMISE,—*"I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE."*

Life in Death. The immortal powers of the soul shall manifest themselves amidst the decays of nature, the infirmities, afflictions, and dissolution of the animal body being discovered by the judgment, recollection, resolution, confidence, affection, peace, tranquillity, hope, love, gratitude, communion with God, enjoyed by the dying believer;—"the well of water," as it were "springing up" in him. John iv. 15.—*Life after Death.* This is most clearly promised to the christian: his "body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is *life*, because of righteousness." (Rom. viii. 10; see also Matt. x. 18;) "Because I live, ye shall *live*." (John xiv. 19.) "Who-

soever liveth and believeth in me shall *never die*.”—(John xi. 26.) “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and *not die*.” (John vi. 50.) “If a man keep my saying, he shall *never see death*.” (John viii. 51.) — — *Life for ever*; i. e., properly eternal. (John iii. 15, 16; 1 John v. 11, 12.)—It means more than mere existence; a life in a sense not capable of being possessed here; life worthy of the name; to be enjoyed in body as well as soul; including sensibility, activity, enjoyment, of which we participate in a small degree on earth, but we shall then be “as the angels of God.” (Matt. xxii. 30.)

Life here means *felicity*.—The vision of God; (Matt. v. 8; 1 John iii, 2;) the enjoyment of him; (Rev. xxi. 3—6;) the presence of Christ; (John xvii. 24; xiv. 3; Luke xxxiii. 43; Acts vii. 55—59; Phil. i. 23; 2 Cor. v. 8;) the society of saints and angels; (Heb. xii. 22, 23;) the new heavens and earth, and new Jerusalem; (Rom. viii. 19—23; Rev. xxi. 10—15;) in which will be found all conveniences and delights;—and we shall have senses of body, and faculties of mind, perfect, and fitted to take all in. There will be, too, an absence of temptation, sin, and sorrow for ever. (Rev. xxi. 4.)—

Honor and Glory. There is an allusion here to the ancient custom of animating racers or wrestlers, &c., at the public games of Greece, and soldiers by honorary rewards, as crowns, sometimes of laurel, and sometimes, though seldom, of silver and gold. These they were permitted to wear on public occasions; and, in consequence of receiving them, were often entitled to peculiar immunities and privileges. It must be observed that the Lord Jesus, “the Prince of Life,” conscious of his Divine power, speaks here with an elevation and

dignity such as no earthly prince or general could ever assume. He promises "a crown of life" to those that should suffer death in his cause; a crown that should not only be ever fresh and fair, and should flourish with immortal bloom, but which should give immortality to the person it adorned. Nay, one which should not only be a monument of victory, but an ensign of royalty, a crown connected with "a kingdom," and with what no other kingdom can give, perpetual life to enjoy it, perpetual youth and vigour to relish all its delights. Thus, in other passages, we read of the "crown of life," (James i. 12.) the "crown of righteousness," (2 Tim. iv. 8,) "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Pet. v. 4.

Though this felicity and glory should be conferred on all that are "faithful unto death," yet peculiar rewards await the faithful ministers of Christ. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Dan. xii. 3.) These rewards shall be in proportion to their holiness, their disinterested labours in Christ's cause, and their sufferings patiently endured, especially for his name. (Rev. xxii. 12.) "Every man," every minister of Christ, "shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." 1 Cor. iii. 8; 1 Pet. v. 1—4.) — —

These rewards, this crown, is said to be *given*. It is the *gift* (*χάρισμα*) of *grace*, free and unmerited, and not a retribution due to the merit of the person receiving it. This is a certain and important truth. — — "The wages," the proper wages, "of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life," &c. (Rom. vi. 23.) There is no proportion between the value of our services and this glorious crown which we expect. It is mercy that par-

done our sins, and grace that accepts our services, and much more that rewards them. We must not lay too much stress, however, on the word “give,” in this point of view, because it is sometimes used to signify rendering a retribution justly due, and that in instances where grace and favour have, in propriety of speech, no concern at all. (Matt. xx. 8; Col. iv. 1.)

Another important circumstance in the promise is, that this crown shall be conferred by the hands of Christ himself. “*I will give thee,*” &c. St. Paul mentions this circumstance in terms which show how highly he valued it, and in what an endearing light he viewed it; “which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me.” He alludes to the judge who presided in the Grecian games, who was always a person of eminence, and himself conferred the reward on him that overcame.—Thus the Lord himself, the great Judge of the contest, whose eye is continually upon every servant, steward, soldier, and minister of his, who witnesses the whole course of our labours, contests, and sufferings, shall himself confer the promised crown. It shall not be sent by an inferior hand; not even by that of the noblest angel that stands before his throne; but shall be bestowed by that hand which would make the least gift valuable: and what dignity, then, will it add to the greatest?

One thing more to be noticed is, that this reward shall not be conferred in *private*: it shall be conferred before the assembled world of angels and men; and that with the greatest solemnity and magnificence. The name of every faithful servant shall be called over; he shall appear when called, and, while millions of eyes are fixed upon him, Jesus shall crown him in the view

of all. His friends and companions in tribulation, &c., his wife, his parents, his children shall see it with joy and ecstasy, and shall congratulate him in the possession of an honour in which they also shall share. His enemies shall see it with envy and rage, and shall be tormented at the sight: perceiving, that while by their malicious assaults they were endeavouring to destroy him, they were only adding to the lustre of his crown and the greatness of his felicity; that, at the same time, by their efforts to work his ruin, they were increasing their own misery, and “treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.”—This crown the faithful servant shall ever wear, as an everlasting proof of Christ’s esteem and love. Nor shall it be merely a splendid ornament, but a rich revenue of glory, authority, and power. For he “shall reign for ever and ever,” and be a “*king*” as well as “a *priest* unto God.” “I appoint unto you a kingdom.” “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.” (Rev. iii. 21.)—

APPLICATION.

And how, shall we not adore the unmerited love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who thus rewards our very imperfect services, performed, not by our own ability, but in the strength of grace? who acknowledges, approves, and blesses such unprofitable servants, who have done no more than was our duty; nay, nor half so much;—and have done it, not by our strength, but in the strength of grace continually imparted by him? The crown was purchased by his blood; we are washed from our sins in his blood; and the robes in which we appear have been “washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.”—Shall not a generous and noble ambition be

excited within us to secure this crown of life and glory? Let us remember it is free for us all. They indeed, who run in an earthly race, or who contend for victory and honour among men, "run all," contend all, and yet "but one receiveth the prize." But here we may all receive, and shall, if we strive lawfully and earnestly. And shall we *slight* or *neglect* this crown? Nay, shall we not *labour*, be *ambitious*, (φιλοτιμουμεθα,) and give all diligence, and make all haste to be accepted of him? (2 Cor. v. 9.) Yea, like St. Paul, this one thing let us do; leaving the things behind, let us press to those which are before.—And shall we regard the difficulties and sufferings in the way? the miry vales we have to wade through, the steep hills we have to climb, the rough roads, &c., the enemies we have to encounter? Shall we not rather say with the Apostle, "We reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. viii. 18.) "For this cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Cor. iv. 16.)—Especially, shall not we, whom our great Master has "accounted faithful, putting us into the ministry," say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself. so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus?" (Acts xx. 24.) For what though death itself be in our way, and what though it should be permitted to attack us in its most terrific forms, as it has attacked myriads of our Lord's most faithful servants, who were slain with the sword, stoned, sawn asunder, burned in slow fires, &c., yet even death itself we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and the word

of our Testimony; like those who of old “endured a great fight of afflictions,” “came out of great tribulation,” “loved not their lives unto death,” and are, “therefore before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.” (Rev. vii. 15.) — —

Hail! Stephen, stoned, first of christian martyrs!—James, slain with the sword! Peter, crucified with thine head downwards! Paul, offered as an oblation on God’s altar! John, put in a caldron of boiling oil!—Hail! ye men of modern date, without whose sufferings the ranks of the noble army of martyrs could not be filled up!—Jerome of Prague and John Huss! Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and all the English and Scotch martyrs!—of you the world was not worthy!—And hail! ye other illustrious departed christians, who were not called to seal the truth with your blood! and you who have fallen of late!—Hail! ye happy spirits! your labours and sufferings are ended, your race is run, your conflicts are past, your warfare is accomplished!

CCLXI.

THE HAPPINESS OF SUCH AS “DIE IN THE LORD.”

REVELATION XIV. 13.

I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

WHAT a blessing to mankind, immersed as we are naturally, in ignorance and error, in sin and sorrow, in

affliction and death, is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! Were it not for this, we should still "sit in darkness and the shadow of death," like the heathen world, unacquainted not only with God, but with ourselves; what we are, whence we came, and whither we are going; neither understanding the true end of life, nor what becomes of us at death. Our bodies and souls, God and the world, time and eternity, would be equally a mystery to us, and we should find ourselves in a state of utter uncertainty with respect to those things which, above all others, it concerns us to know. But, in the Gospel "the day-spring from on high visits us," and if the eyes of our understanding be not closed through unbelief, or sinful prejudices, we are made "children of light and of the day." We are no longer "vain in our imaginations," nor fall a prey to vain uncertain reasonings and fruitless conjectures with respect to the invisible and eternal state that awaits us; but "know what is the hope of our calling," and have a prospect of the felicity and glory reserved by God for those that love him. "Full day is poured on darkest scenes of time." "All things," even those to which our nature is most averse, as poverty, reproach, affliction, and pain, are now seen to be "working for our good." Death itself is abolished, or rendered an event advantageous in its consequences. Its nature is so changed, that, instead of being viewed as the gloomy entrance into a state of destruction and misery, it is considered as the gate of life and salvation, and we are enabled to credit the voice from heaven, which proclaims in the words of my text, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," &c.—These words, as they stand in this part of the wonderful chain of prophecy

contained in this book, seem to have been intended to forewarn the people of God of the dreadful persecutions and sufferings which awaited them from the Popish beast and his image, at the time of the breaking out of the Reformation; sufferings so great, that he is represented as happy that should die and escape, or be released from them; and to afford them, and all others to the end of time, some support and consolation under their sufferings, from the prospect of future felicity. — — Consider,

I. WHO MAY PROPERLY BE SAID TO “DIE IN THE LORD?”

By “the Lord” here is meant Christ; a similar form of speaking is used 1 Thess. iv. 14. Before we can “sleep,” or “die” in him, we must live in him; and that we may live in him, we must be in him. The phrase of being “in Christ” often occurs in scripture. (Rom. viii. 1; 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. v. 6; vi. 15.) It implies another, also much used, “Christ in us.” (Col. i. 27; 2 Cor. xiii. 5.) These two phrases do not mean exactly the same thing, but they imply each other. (John xiv. 20; xv. 4.)

They signify—Union with him. Not nominal and external, as in church membership, but real and internal; illustrated in scripture by that of friendship; (John xv. 13, 14;) marriage; (Rom. vii. 4;) of a tree and its branches; (John xv. 5;) the head of the human body and the members: which are real and internal unions. Not imperceptible, but sensible; (John xiv. 15—23;) implying love, joy, peace, gratitude, which are felt and tasted. (1 Peter ii. 2; Heb. vi. 4, 5.) Not lifeless and dead, but vital and quickening; (John xiv. 19; Rom. viii.

10;) as the union of a tree with the branches, of the head with the members, of the soul and body, is vital, and there is a real communication of life; so it is here: and as by the natural life we have lively perceptions of natural objects, various desires after them, enjoyments of them, and actions concerning them; so by this union, the soul has new impressions, new desires, new enjoyments, new actions, about objects of a far superior nature, objects divine and eternal. Not inefficient and barren, but prolific and fruitful: the above-mentioned unions are fruitful, so this. (Rom. vii. 4; John xv. 2, 5; Eph. iv. 15, 16; Col. ii. 19.)—An interest in Christ as our Teacher, Mediator, Saviour, and Governor; our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; our friend, brother, head and husband; he is ours, with all he is and has. — —

Now this interest and union with Christ are obtained, some think, by mere baptism, and that all professing christians possess them, but this is a mistake. (Tit. i. 16; 2 Tim. ii. 19.) Others think that they are necessarily annexed to an attendance on ordinances, and the use of means; but neither is this the case. (2 Tim. iii. 5; John iv. 23, 24.) Others again, that a regularity of conduct, an harmless and unblameable behaviour, proves a person to be possessed of them; but this is also an error. (Rev. iii. 1; John iii. 3; Rom. viii. 9; 2 Cor. xiii. 5.) Nor are even good works a certain sign. (Gal. vi. 15; 1 Cor. xiii. 3.)—But they are obtained, on our part by faith; Col. ii. 12; Gal. ii. 20; v. 6;) having for its object the Gospel, (Rom. i. 16,) Christ, (John iii. 16, 36; vi. 29, 40; 1 John v. 11—13,) and the promises; (2 Cor. i. 20; Heb. xi. 13;) producing love, (Gal. v. 6; 1 Peter ii. 7,) victory over the world, (1 John v. 4. 5.)

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purity of heart: (Acts xv. 9:) On his part by the Holy Spirit, (1 Cor. xii. 13; John xiv. 17, 20; 1 John iii. 24,) producing the fruits of the Spirit, and mind of Christ, (Phil. ii. 5; 1 John ii. 6; iii. 3; iv. 17,) and making us new creatures. (2 Cor. v. 17.) — —

Those who, being thus “in Christ,” persevere, (John xv. 4, 6, 7, 9; Col. i. 22, 23; Rom. xi. 20—23; Heb. iii. 12; x. 38,) and live and die in him. — — Contemplate.

II. THE HAPPINESS OF SUCH.

Happy are the living that live “in the Lord!” For they are freed from the guilt of sin, and have peace with God, (Rom. viii. 1; v. 1,) and, therefore, are happy; (Psal. xxxii. 1;) from the power of sin, (Rom. viii. 2; vi. 14—22,) and have peace of conscience; they enjoy the peculiar favour, protection, and care of God, (Ps. xci.) and a supply of all wants; (Phil. iv. 19;) are made God’s children and his heirs, (John i. 12, Rom. viii. 14—17; Gal. iv. 4; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18,) have a lively and joyful hope, (1 Pet. i. 3,) and an earnest of heaven in communion with God. — —

But the labours and sufferings of this life are a great drawback from their happiness.—Temporal labour of body, or mind, care, solicitude, study, toil, fatigue, to which all are more or less subject, (Gen. iii. 17—19,) through the curse; but from these we rest at death.—Spiritual labours of various kinds and in various degrees. It is taken for granted that all who are “in the Lord” will labour, (Matt. xx. 1,) for the glory of God, the good of mankind, and their own salvation. All the graces wrought in them imply this: repentance, faith, hope, love, union with Christ, a new creation, &c. must

all produce their proper fruits. It is true the people of God are not reluctant to this labour. They find the yoke of Christ "easy and his burden light;" his service perfect freedom. (Matt. xi. 30; 1 John v. 3.) But as self-denial, mortification of sin, taking up the cross are necessary, it will be an addition to our happiness to rest from this labour.—Christianity is a warfare, a fight against the enemies of our salvation; and watchfulness, prayer, and every branch of christian armour is necessary for us, that we may "stand in the evil day." (Eph. vi. 13.) This warfare is accomplished at death.—Christianity is a race; of experience, and we must "press to the mark:" of duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, and we must be diligent; of suffering. and we have divers waters and fires to pass through.—The original word, (*κοπων*) means also sufferings. All Christ's followers must suffer; (Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 12; 1 Pet. ii. 20, 21;) be exposed to sufferings of different kinds, as poverty, reproach, affliction. Although we are supported under them, and they are sanctified to us, and shall work for our good, yet being a heavy and continual burden upon the mind, it is a great deliverance to rest from them.—The original word (*αναπαυωμενται*,) means *may be refreshed*, i. e. after their labours. The same word is used Matt. xi. 27, 28. — —

The soul, we must observe, is distinct from the body; (Gen. ii. 7; Eccles. xii. 7; Rom. viii. 10; Matt. x. 28; 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3; 2 Pet. i. 13;) outlives it; (Luke xvi. 9, 22, 23, 27, 28; Heb. vi. 12; Luke ix. 30, 31; 1 Pet. iii. 18—20; Heb. xii. 23; Luke xx. 37, 38.)—The soul of a saint, upon its separation from the body, is admitted to a state of happiness expressed by a marriage feast. (Matt. xxii. 2—14; Rev. xix. 9; Luke xxii. 42,

43;) consisting in knowledge; (1 Cor. xiii. 9—12;) love; in the highest pleasure and delight; (Psal. xvi. 11; Rev. xxi. 6, 7, &c.) the society of patriarchs, prophets, &c., of angels, (Heb. xii. 22,) the presence and converse of Christ; (John xvii. 24; xiv. 3; 2 Cor. v. 6—8; Phil. i. 21—23;) the vision and enjoyment of God; (Matt. v. 8;) all this in paradise. (Luke xxiii. 43; 2 Cor. xii. 2—4.) —

“Their works follow them.” This is meant of the rewards, after the resurrection and the day of judgment. Their works do not go before them, as affording them a title to such reward, but proving the sincerity of their faith. (Matt. xxvii. 35—40; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Gal. vi. 7—9; Rev. xxii. 12.)—This is a reward wholly of grace; (Luke xvii. 10;) yet it will be in proportion to our labours and usefulness. (1 Cor. iii. 8; Matt. x. 41, 42; 2 Cor. ix. 6.) —

CCLXII.

THE REFERENCE TO BE MADE TO WORKS IN THE LAST JUDGMENT.

REVELATION XX. 12.

And the dead were judged—according to their works.

WHAT is meant by works? Inward and outward holiness, an unblameable, useful, and holy conduct, (Phil. iv. 8,) a conformity to, and imitation of, God and Christ, especially works of mercy and charity to mankind.—By the evidence of these: our names are not recorded in the book of life without repentance, faith, love, an union with Christ; but all these are evidenced by our works, (Matt. iii. 10; Luke iii. 8, 9; Gal. v. 6;

James ii. 17, 18; John iii. 14—21; 1 John iii. 23, 24; John xv. 5.) Some of these, especially works of mercy and charity, will show whether we are covetous or liberal, for we are required to give; whether we are effeminate and self-indulgent, or self-denying, for we must visit the abodes of wretchedness and disease, whether we are slothful or laborious, for we are required to take pains, and be unwearied in well doing; whether we are hard-hearted and cruel, or compassionate and kind; for “as the elect of God,” we are required to “put on bowels of mercies,” &c. — —

No wonder, therefore, that works are represented as the hinge on which our condemnation or acquittance will turn at the great day. (Matt. xxv. 30; James ii. 13; Matt. v. 7; Rom. ii. 5.)—According to these, (Rev. xxii. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 8,) our reward or punishment will be greater or less in proportion. (Heb. vi. 11, 12; Gal. vi. 8—10; 2 Cor. ix. 6.)—For they are amiable and excellent in themselves; not filthy rags, but precious stones. “These things are *good*,” (*καλα*, Tit. iii. 8,) “pleasing” to God (Heb. xiii. 16) and to man. (Job xxix. 7—13.) They make us like God, “profitable to man,” by lessening, removing, or preventing his misery.—They are the end of man’s creation, (Eph. ii. 10,) preservation, (Luke xiii. 6—9; Matt. iii. 10,) redemption, (Tit. ii. 14,) illumination, (Col. i. 9, 10; Eph. v. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 9,) justification, (Tit. iii. 8,) and regeneration, (Eph. ii. 10,) sanctification. (Tit. ii. 14.)—This doctrine seems to have been well understood even in the patriarchal age. (Job. xxxi. 13—22.) — —

[Close the discourse with a suitable application.]

